

STUART OF DUNLEATH.

—
VOL. I.

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STUART OF DUNLEATH.

A STORY OF MODERN TIMES.

BY

THE HON. MRS. NORTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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SANTA BARBARA

TO

HER MAJESTY,

THE

QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS.

MADAM,

IN availing myself of the gracious permission accorded me, to dedicate these volumes to Your Majesty, I may perhaps be allowed a few words by way of preface.

When one of the most eloquent of English divines—the celebrated Jeremy Taylor—dedicated his “Holy Dying” to the Earl of Carberry, he said : “ Because I much honour you, and because I would do honour to myself, I have written your name in the entrance of my book.” The sentiment thus expressed by Jeremy Taylor, is one which should inspire all dedications ; and I can with the utmost sincerity affirm, that it is the soul of my present address.

If an author be fortunate in his dedication, who knows that whatever is valuable in his work will be surely valued ; and that whatever is true in

description, noble in feeling, or tender in sentiment, will find quick and ready response in the heart of his patron ; then I may rest content. I have the happy conviction that my volumes are offered to the most competent, as well as the most indulgent of judges : while, from Your Majesty's complete familiarity with the English language, my heart will need no translator to convey its thoughts to yours.

The power of writing has always been to me a source of intense pleasure ; it has been my best solace in hours of gloom ; and the name I have earned as an author in my native land, is the only happy boast of my life.

Holding, as I do, that that power entails a certain responsibility, I have not ventured to present to my countrymen, or to offer to your Majesty, a mere romance—the weaving of idle thoughts to amuse idle hours. I have endeavoured, at least, to write with a distinct purpose:—to illustrate the working of particular faults, on our own destinies and the destinies of others; and at the same time to uphold a wider toleration than we are generally willing to accord to those defects which do not exist in ourselves.

If I have failed to make this purpose clear in my story, it is not for

want of pains ; but for want of ability ; for, carelessly, no part of this book has been written. Nor will I allow that pains and purpose are thrown away upon a work of fiction ; since, from the early time of fables, fiction has ever held the dignity of ambassador from the court of truth.

I have done what I could, in the line of writing I have attempted. And since authorship is a species of sovereignty ; since writers are governors, for the time, of such hearts as their words can reach ; and I, as an author, may thus govern a few hearts, while Your Majesty governs many : I do but copy the good old custom of simple

days, which bade the petty rulers of the earth bring tribute to the more mighty,—and bring my tribute in the shape of this book.

I do not know that there remains any observation for me to make; unless it be one which more especially affects your private sympathies. When last I saw Your Majesty, you were mourning a child of extraordinary beauty and promise. It may interest you to know that in the description given in these volumes of the death of a child, the pious resignation which prompts it to utter a prayer, instead of a vain call for rescue, is an instance taken from real life.

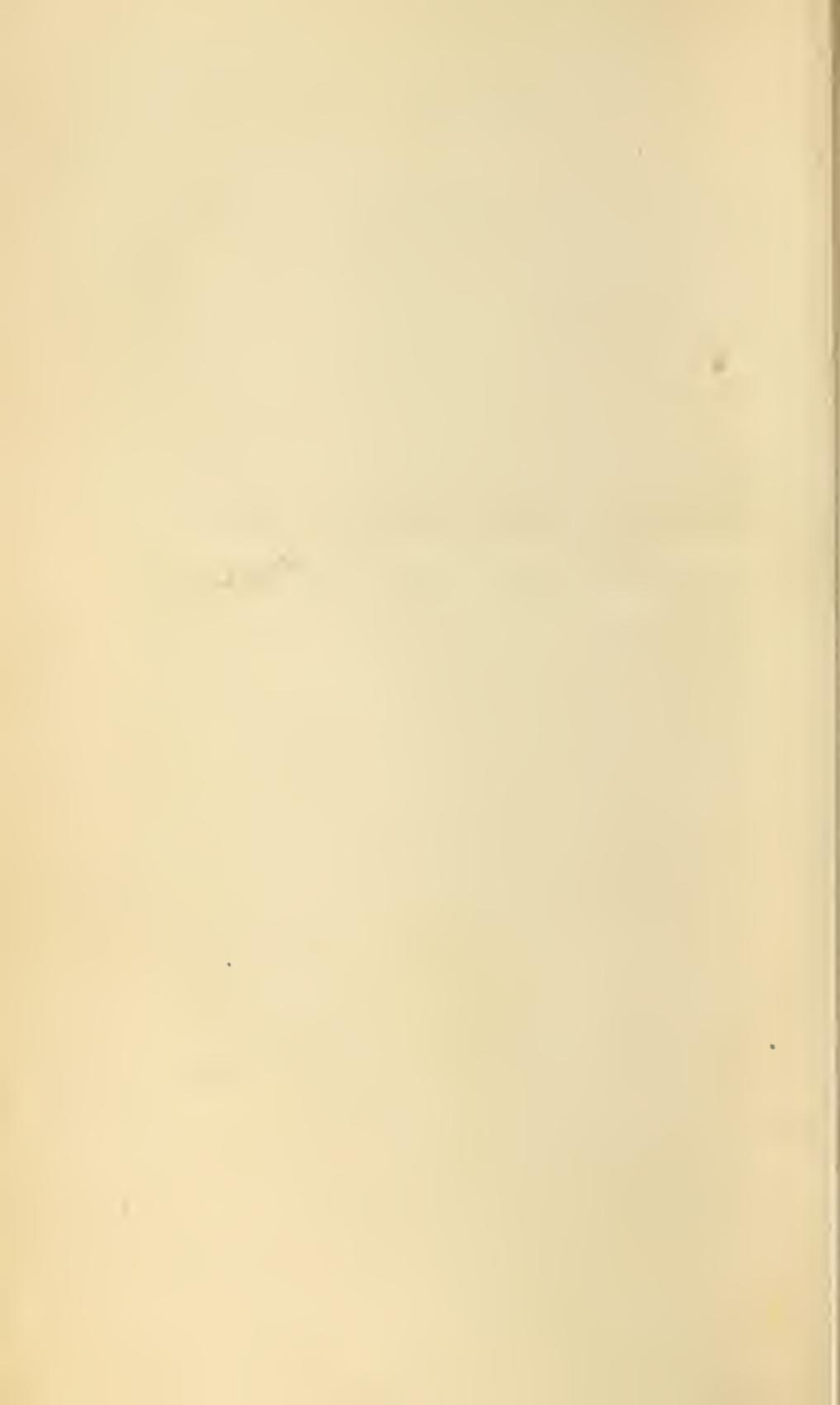
With earnest wishes for Your Majesty's welfare and happiness, I now close my letter of dedication; happy in being permitted to offer the only testimony in my power of gratitude and affection; and so recal myself to Your Majesty's remembrance by lightening some dull unoccupied hour; which would have passed more heavily, but for this book.

Your Majesty's

Devoted Servant,

CAROLINE ELIZABETH SARAH NORTON.

LONDON,
MAY, 1851.



STUART OF DUNLEATH.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER.

THE post had just come in.

A common-place every-day occurrence ; connected in the general mind with pasted stamps and Christmas-boxes. No longer the romantic event it used to be, when, with piquant irregularity, unexpected messengers alighted from their reeking steeds at the gates of fair castles, and presented on

bended knee, some solitary missive confided to their charge. A mere matter of course; not to be thought of in any other light.

And yet it is a startling reflection, that, at a particular hour of the morning, there is to thousands of the millions a second waking as it were; a waking of the heart after the waking of the body. Thousands are astir, each in his separate home; all occupied with a similar interest; the chief, perhaps the only point of sympathy, in their various lives.

The post is come in. “A noun of multitude, signifying many.” The epistles which lay huddled together in the mail-bag, have been sorted and delivered according to their several addresses. They have been scattered along the rows of houses like seed in a ploughed furrow, and according to the seed sown, is the crop raised; tears for some, and

smiles for others ; joy and grief, like unseen spirits, entering with the post.

The letters are come.

That far-travelled treasure, the ship-letter, with its news from distant climes :—the love-letter ; the remittance, or refusal to remit ; the attorney's letter, with a threat of “ulterior measures,” terrible in its vagueness ; the maternal counsel ; the keen and bitter reproach ; the half-jesting, half-scandalous gossip, immediately to be repeated and multiplied as though a stereotyped edition were called for ; the vain appeal, written with anguish, blotted with tears ; the letter of empty compliment or ceremony ; the black-edged, black-sealed, ominous-looking announcement of the death of a friend or relation—all these have arrived at their destination.

How troubled is the stream of life's waters

as the spirit of the hour passes over its face. If we could look into those homes whose blank windows and closed doors wear so exactly the same aspect as they did an hour ago, what changes we might behold! There sits a matron weeping; her gentle girls are weeping too; they rose cheerfully this morning; all was as usual; the morning-prayer, the household task, the plans for the morrow; but the storm has swept over them. They know themselves widowed and orphaned —since the post came in.

In the next house, hasty orders are given, preparations are being made for a sudden journey. Death, which came as a certainty to that other small family circle, only threatens here. The absent son lies sick of a fever—delirious, perhaps dying; but there is hope. Are the horses come? how slowly the orders seem obeyed: all has been hurry,

terror, and confusion,—since the post came in.

Close by the shade is the sunshine; look into the dwelling opposite. A blushing girl is there, with her parents. She would fain cover her face with her hands, but they are playfully held by her father; smilingly, and yet tenderly, he watches her downcast eyes, through whose shy lids his glance seems to pierce. The lover has proposed: he is accepted: she is happy, though she is to leave home. Home! she has had a vision of a “home of her own”—since the post came in.

Despair, ruin, disgrace. The party-wall perhaps, alone divides her from a house where these have alighted, to crush some bankrupt speculator. He has received a letter, and read it. He stares wildly on vacancy.

“ His eyes
Are with his heart, and that is far away.”

In fancy, he beholds the face of his daughter, innocent, dimpled, child-like. He sees his sons, handsome youths just entering manhood ; he sees their mother, who has been his good true wife for nearly thirty years. Familiar faces glide along the blank wall opposite, like figures from some dreadful magic-lantern. He sits, now perplexed and trembling ; now still and stony : there has been but one idea clear to him, the idea of SUICIDE—since the post came in.

Even to those who have not their part in the morning's distribution, the post-hour is an hour of interest. How often has it been waited for with sick heart-throbs, with bitter restless anxiety. How often, gliding by in barrenness, has it cast a shade of unutterable dejection on the dial of a sunless day. How often has its very emptiness done more to convince the reason of change, and loss, and

wrong, and neglect, than all the jarring words that ever were penned. Reader ! did you ever wait, longingly, feverishly, for the coming in of the post ? If you have, I pity you. If you have not, I pity you yet more ; for, of anxiety may truly be declared, what a French author has written of love :—

:“ Qui que tu sois, voilà ton maître :
Il l'est, le fut ; ou le doit être !”

On the morning from which this story dates its beginning, the post had just come in, in the retired village of Aspendale. The contents of the bag consisted principally of letters “for Lady Raymond, Aspendale Park,” which were put in a little leather pouch of their own, that they might travel in proper state from the village post-office to the hall door. There, the leather pouch being delivered to a footman in livery, and

unlocked by a superior being who wore no livery, its contents were consigned to the lady's-maid, to be carried into the sacred precincts of “my lady's dressing-room.”

Into that darkly-curtained and richly-carpeted apartment, the abigail entered with cautious tread. Avoiding the peck of a very large yellow-crested cockatoo ; slightly noticing a crimson lory and a green monkey, who seemed to be old acquaintances ; and dexterously steering her way through such shoals of little tables, foot-stools, and easy chairs, as would have completely barred the passage to any one less accustomed to that difficult navigation, she reached the sofa where her lady was reclining, and laid the letters on the table ; saying, as she did so, with the interest of one who had been many years in the same service, “A letter from Madras among them, my lady.”

As the letters were brought in, a fair, fragile child of nine years old, rose from the stool by the sofa ; and saying, with a sigh, “ Post-time, mamma, we must leave off talking,” withdrew to the window, where a Hindoo Ayah was arranging some new toys, and sitting down on a low ottoman by the nurse’s side, conversed with her in whispers.

Even without the presence of the native servant, a stranger could have told, at a glance, that the occupant of that room had been in India. The peculiar furniture, the japanned cabinets, the tropical birds, the knick-knacks in sandal wood, ebony, and ivory, the profusion of shawls and draperies, un-English in their look and texture, and still more, perhaps, the appearance of the delicate English child—all told the same tale.

Look well at that child, reader, for she is our heroine.

Pale, tranquil, with slight limbs, and bright spiritual eyes full of that peculiar expression, at once wild, shy, and gentle, which the French denominate *fauve*, with a general air of feebleness and languor, redeemed by a look of thought and intellect in the straight fine forehead, and a certain degree of pride in the small melancholy mouth; a little taller than children of her age usually are; her hair a little longer too than is common, and plaited by the skilful fingers of the Ayah in countless slender braids; such was Eleanor Raymond.

If you had met her out walking, muffled in her bonnet and shawl, you would not have noticed her. You met a pale, lady-like child, and that was all; but if you had seen her in

a room, above all if you had spoken to her, she would have remained for ever shrined in that strange gallery of pictures which memory gradually collects. Your eye would never again have rested on any group of young children, without recalling to mind the child you once saw in Lady Raymond's dressing-room.

Little Eleanor sate still, and conversed kindly with her Ayah ; but it was plain she was only half attentive to the efforts made to entertain her, and she glanced restlessly from time to time towards the sofa, as if waiting for the welcome signal of recal.

“ I think,” at length said she with a sigh, “ I am growing too old for toys, Maya ; I am very much obliged to Emma Fordyce for this Noah’s Ark, but I wish I could give it to some little child ; if I knew any little child,” added she in a plaintive tone. “ I

like only the dear elephant, because it reminds me of India and of papa, though there is no palanquin on its back ; I wonder if the carpenter could make me a palanquin.”

• A sob from the lady who reclined on the sofa startled Eleanor ; swift, gentle, noiseless, she flew across the room. “ Mamma, dear mamma, what is the matter ? Is there bad news ? Is my brother Godfrey’s ship wrecked ? Is papa ill ?”

Lady Raymond kissed her daughter, and asked, in a low, trembling voice :

“ Should you remember your papa if you were to see him ?”

The little girl trembled also, and stood for a minute without speaking, gazing on the joy that sparkled in her mother’s tearful eyes : then she spoke rapidly, eagerly, clasping her small hands together.

“ If I remember him ! Oh ! dear mamma,

how could I forget him ? Sometimes I dream of the day he blessed me and bid me good-bye. He blessed you too, mamma, and told you to write often; and take care of your health. I remember India very well, though. I was a young child ; I remember—”

Eleanor paused.

She was going to tell her mother she remembered her baby-brother ; but she remembered also how her mother had wailed and wept when that babe was laid in its Indian grave, far away. With tender instinct she stopped, coloured, and showed her consciousness of colouring by the quick graceful movement with which she laid the back of her little hand against her glowing cheek ; then, twining her arms round her mother's neck, she said,

“ Is papa coming home ? I am sure that is the news ; is he coming, mamma—at last ?”

“ He is coming, my own little Eleanor ; he is coming at last—thank God.”

And, folded in a close embrace, the happy mother and child rejoiced together, sobbing with glad excitement.

The post had come in—and brought to the mother one hope, and a thousand memories ; to the child, one memory, and hopes as countless as the motes that dance in a sunbeam. And truly, two more helpless beings than that invalid woman and her fragile daughter, never waited the coming of a father and protector.

CHAPTER II.

EXPECTATION.

LADY RAYMOND had been twice married. Her previous union had proved as unhappy as the present was fortunate. The penniless daughter of a half-pay officer, her exquisite beauty had early captivated the heart of Captain Marsden, who wooed and won her in a period of five weeks. Neither could be presumed to know much of the other's disposition in this time, and no two disposi-

tions could have been more dissimilar. Captain Marsden was a man of nice honour, and generous feelings, but his temper was stern, imperious, and irritable ; he had a constitution of iron, reverenced punctuality, and had a secret (and very unsailor-like) contempt for women in general, and for fragile and helpless women in particular. He desired to find in his wife the qualities he valued in his crew, activity and obedience ; in his home, the exact order which is observed on board a man-of-war. His home and his wife were precisely contrary to these pre-conceived notions, and on the rock of this double disappointment the barque of affection was wrecked. Fear, and a sense of injury, took the place of love in the young wife's heart, who had been the spoilt idol of her surviving parent, and the beauty of a garrisoned sea-port town ; weariness, anger, and

something very near akin to disgust, took its place in the heart of Captain Marsden. Their mutual existence was embittered, and so continued till a rapid fever carried off Captain Marsden in the prime of life, leaving his widow with a little boy to educate, and a very narrow income.

Her beauty and gentleness attracted as many suitors as the obscure retirement in which she lived, rendered possible; but her timid heart long dreaded to venture on a second choice; and when, at length, General Sir John Raymond proposed for the beautiful young widow, it was with a feeling in which fear contended with love, and many an anxious vow never to offend or disobey him, that she once more pronounced the fatal “yes,” and became again and under happier auspices —a wife.

The strength of her good resolves was not

destined to be tried. Sir John Raymond, himself the widower of the haughtiest, cleverest, and most managing of women, found a charm in the very foibles of his new bride. Her gentleness, her helplessness, were pleasanter to him than the somewhat tyrannical stand-alone-ism of Lady Raymond the First. There was a disparity in their ages too, which seemed to him to entitle her to indulgence; and when she looked timidly and anxiously towards him, conscious of some error which Captain Marsden would have sternly reproved, and saw the kind and amused smile with which he met her perplexed glances, she felt a sweet consciousness of being so beloved, that her faults were no longer justly weighed.

She returned that love with a sort of tender worship; and something like wonder at her being held worthy to inspire attachment in a

man so superior to all whom she had ever known. Life, which had threatened to be full of storms that terrified and depressed her, wore the tranquil brightness of a summer's day ; and the care of her little boy, Godfrey Marsden, which had been a happiness full of fitful alarm, and oppressive responsibility, became a source of maternal pride and security, shared as it now was with the generous-hearted protector, in whose strength there was no sternness, in whose love, no tyranny.

As the boy grew, his character and inclination seemed alike to point to the choice of his father's profession ; and Lady Raymond, with a mixture of awe and triumph, saw her son stand before her in a midshipman's uniform, his sword by his side ; exhibiting, in his frank courageous countenance, something of the hard determination which she remembered in her husband's face : an expression she had ad-

mired, as bold and manly, while he was yet only a suitor for her hand, but which experience had taught her to watch with shrinking timidity in after years.

With steady kindness, Sir John Raymond did his best for the little fellow he first recollected seeing, with a black crape round his hat, an orphan under very helpless tutelage ; and Godfrey Marsden creditably pursued the career pointed out for him. His courage and obedience had already obtained favorable notice from his superior officers ; and if he was less popular with his companions, that might arise from a gravity and reserve unusual at his age, and utterly unwelcome in the larking riotous merry world, of a midshipman's mess-room.

An important command in India having been bestowed on Sir John, he sailed for that land of the tropics, accompanied by his gentle wife : and at first their happiness seemed

without a cloud. But after some time, Lady Raymond's health, which had never been robust, completely gave way ; and to this was superadded grief for the loss of two or three little delicate children, who seemed only born to die. Sir John Raymond's popularity also declined ; reforms were projected and introduced ; and the usual fate of those who are entrusted with the execution of measures abroad which are so smoothly planned at home, became his. The odium of all which was unwelcome in the new arrangements was attributed to him, while for that which was satisfactory he obtained no credit. Harassed by public struggles and private anxieties, he thought of retiring from his arduous position, and returning with his wife and surviving children, from the sultry and oppressive climate where he vainly laboured to serve his fellow-

creatures, to the pure air of his native land ; while his ministerial friends at home, convinced that the fault could not lie in their scheme (on the perfection of which they had all complimented each other) but that “somehow or other Raymond must have managed very foolishly,” thought of recalling him. The difficulty, however, of finding a man able to fill his place, prevented this insult from being added to the numerous vexations which already oppressed him, while a high and chivalrous sense of duty equally restrained him from voluntarily throwing up his command.

Meanwhile his infant son died ; and the long and dangerous fever which this great affliction brought on Lady Raymond, made her husband resolve immediately to send her with little Eleanor to England. A friend was

commissioned to choose and prepare a residence for the helpless object of his anxious love, and Aspendale Park was taken.

At their melancholy parting, Sir John Raymond for the first time wished his wife had been more capable of comprehending his affairs and anxieties ; there was much he would have said, which the character and understanding of the woman he had married, rendered superfluous or impossible, and which was checked back under that conviction. He could neither explain the past, nor urge hope for the future, nor theorise on the education of his little daughter, to the feeble being who was about to be separated from him. He could only entreat of her to write constantly, and to not let his child forget him ; accompany her on board to see that her cabin was furnished with every

comfort and luxury for the voyage, and then return with a heavy heart to land—the land which now held, for him, only the graves of his children.

Lady Raymond returned to England a confirmed invalid; her natural indolence increased tenfold by the relaxing climate she had lived in; and by a certain sadness, which made inactivity more complete as a habit, than it was, even with her, while yet the elasticity of youth and happiness remained. She lived a torpid life, feebly sunned by the distant hope of Sir John's return. The only exertion she was ever known to make, was that of writing letters to him. Very long, and very foolish, were the letters Lady Raymond wrote, and such as a stranger would have thought it impossible to wade through; yet they were read many times by him to

whom they were addressed, and always before he broke the seal of any other epistle: and the proud, intellectual, distinguished General, whose services were so valuable to his native country, and whose position was so brilliant in his land of exile, sighed for the time when, the noonday labour of existence being over, he might spend its sunset and decline with his wife and child, in his distant English home.

No wonder that Lady Raymond watched anxiously for his arrival after nearly four years' absence! No wonder she roused herself to walk down the lime avenue in the park, and strained her eyes for the expected glimpse of a carriage through the trees, in a distant turn of the road. And no wonder that, after watching till all grew dim and indistinct in the twilight, forgetful of her usual fears of evening dew and fatigue, she

called, in a broken disappointed tone, to little Eleanor, to accompany her back to the house, and wept as she sat down in the large comfortable dressing-room, which had never seemed cheerless till that evening.

CHAPTER III.

ELEANOR'S GUARDIAN.

THE Gazette of the next morning contained the following piece of intelligence, which was read with melancholy interest by hundreds to whom he was personally unknown:—

“Arrived H.M.S. ‘Albion,’ from Madras, having on board the body of General Sir John Raymond, K.C.B., who died on his passage home.”

Lady Raymond did not get the papers

till the day after their delivery in town. She spent that day, therefore, as she had spent the preceding, in anxious expectation of the arrival of her husband. The feverish and restless suspense exhausted her, and towards evening she flung herself on a sofa and fell asleep. She woke with a start; the sound of carriage-wheels rapidly driving up to the door was heard; and little Eleanor flew into the room, exclaiming: "Now, mamma, here is papa! here is papa!" The door-bell rang; the bark of the house-dog was answered by the little spaniel, which jumped off its cushion and ran into the hall; servants with lights passed to and fro; all was bustle and confusion.

Lady Raymond disentangled herself from the shawls with which the care of her attendants had encumbered the sofa, and went trembling down stairs.

A gentleman entered at the open door. He was a stranger. She looked eagerly into the dark space beyond him, but no one followed. The servant closed the hall-door, and opened that of the library, into which they mechanically entered.

“Sir John Raymond is scarcely well enough to travel,” said the stranger, in a low voice, and with a slight Scotch accent; “in fact he is very ill; and he sent me—”

“Is there a letter? have you no letter?” said Lady Raymond, wildly interrupting him.

“I have not,” replied he, with some hesitation:

She fixed her eyes with an imploring stare on his face, and as he attempted to continue, she exclaimed :

“He’s dead! If he had been alive, he would have written, if it was only to say, I cannot come! Ah God! you are trying

to break it to me ; but I feel it here ! ” and pressing her hand against her heart, she sank with hysterical sobs to the ground.

The stranger raised her, and rang for assistance. Several terrified servants crowded in.

“ Carry Lady Raymond to her own room, and send for a doctor ; and, stay, is there any friend, any neighbour, within reach, who could be a comfort at this terrible time ? ”

“ No, Sir,” said the lady’s maid. “ My Lady didn’t take much to the people about here ; she didn’t see company.”

“ There’s old Mr. Fordyce, the Rector, father to Miss Emma that’s as good as my Lady’s daughter-in-law,” said the house-keeper.

Lady Raymond moaned, and half opened her eyes.

“ Carry her up stairs ; tell her I will see

her in the morning ; and send for Mr. Fordyce," said the stranger.

No one thought of disputing the orders so unexpectedly given, by a gentleman whom they had never seen before. Lady Raymond was borne to her own room ; a messenger was dispatched for Mr. Fordyce, and the apothecary who lived within a stone's throw of the rectory ; and without further ceremony the stranger was left alone. The gloomy darkness of the library was only relieved by a single candle, which one of the servants had left on the table ; the door of the room remained open. The stranger took two or three turns through the apartment, and then re-seating himself, covered his face with his hands. Little Eleanor stole quietly in, and advanced towards him.

" What has happened, and where is papa ?" faltered she.

“ Child,” said the stranger, solemnly, as he took her hand, “ your father is in heaven, if ever man went there !”

Little Eleanor wept and trembled while he explained to her that her father had left India in bad health, and had died at sea ; that she was now an orphan ; and that he, David Stuart, who had been Sir John’s friend and secretary, was to be her guardian, and had come to Aspendale in the vain hope of being able to break the dreadful news better by word of mouth, than by writing, to her poor mother.

As the little girl stood shivering and weeping by his side, David Stuart’s soul was pierced with anguish. He took the child in his arms, and spoke to her tenderly of her father’s goodness and worth ; of the duty of bowing to God’s will ; of the especial providence over the widow and orphan.

His tone and manner, more than his words, hushed her grief for a while, and she leaned her head silently against his bosom. As he held her there, with a gentle cherishing clasp, he thought of the miserable scene he had witnessed in the death of his friend and benefactor, and the misery he was yet to witness in this home which was to have been the scene of such welcome and rejoicing, where the hope of a happy re-union and calm glad future was for ever blotted out by tears and death. Sorrow overcame him; and with a gush of weeping he kissed the helpless little creature who lay in his arms. She too had been dreaming, in her own childish way, of the desolation which had overtaken her and her mother; of all the joyous preparations they had made in vain.

“ Oh ! never to see papa again ! never

again!" sobbed she, "what shall we do! we were so glad in the morning!"

The renewed attempt which he made to soothe her, was interrupted by the entrance of the housekeeper, who inquired whether he would take any refreshment, and whether it was his intention to remain there that night; adding a hope that he would, as "her lady was so delicate, they really thought the blow would be the death of her," and that she might require to hear the particulars when she became more composed.

"Mr. Fordyce is come, Sir," said another servant, entering hastily; "he would like to speak with you before he goes to my lady—he is in the drawing-room;—this way, Sir. What name shall I give?"

"Stuart."

As the stranger slowly crossed the hall, and ascended the staircase, he heard the order to prepare an apartment for “the gentleman who brought the news,” answered by an interrogative observation from the chamber-maid, that “the room which had been got ready for Sir John, was in order—wouldn’t that do?” and the housekeeper’s reply, “Lord bless me, girl, what put such a thought into your head! I am going this moment to shut the shutters of that room, and lock it up for good and all. Come, Miss Eleanor—come away to bed;—bless me, how the poor child has cried. Put her to bed, nurse—take her away and put her to bed, poor lamb. She’ll sleep as sound as if her father had come home; it’s the nature of her age. Get ready the blue room on the ground floor, next the library, for Mr. What’s-his-

name; and, John, bring a tray for some wine and water;—really one scarcely knows what one's doing, hearing things in this sudden way.”

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH IN EXILE.

THERE was a desolate silence at Aspendale the next morning. The window-shutters were closed: every one spoke in whispers; those whose occupation obliged them to move to and fro in the house, did it stealthily and cautiously, as though they feared to wake one who lay in slumber. The stillness and solemn hush of death was there, instead of the jubilee of welcome. The mighty and oppressive silence which follows the

falling asleep of those whom no earthly sound shall ever rouse again.

David Stuart sat alone at the breakfast-table. The room had a south-east aspect, and the morning sun shone cheerfully on the objects around him ; glowing through the rich crimson draperies of the windows, and lighting some warm Italian landscapes, with which the walls were hung. There was an air of preparation in the apartment, which added to its gaiety, and large vases of flowers had been placed in it by the careful hands of the house keeper the day that Sir John Raymond was expected. While he looked on these things with a sad and abstracted eye, the butler entered and placed the newspapers on the table. As he listlessly glanced over them, he saw the announcement of Sir John Raymond's death ; and though he had himself accom-

panied the invalid on his tedious voyage home ; though to his ear were confided the last whispers of the dying man ; though he had arrived at Aspendale for no other purpose than to break the news of that death to Lady Raymond, he started, as though the intelligence had been unexpected. It is so long, before we become as it were assured of the loss of those we value !

Vague and imperfect as our ideas of that terrible separation, are the first feelings which attend it. We grieve, indeed ; but while we grieve, there is a want of reality and certainty in our sorrow. We repeat to ourselves that they are lost—gone—vanished for ever ; and even while we repeat it, feel as though they might return. For months, the possibility of writing to them, lingers vaguely in our minds : they seem absent, not buried : we recollect that they are dead,

with a burst of weeping, when this mechanical impulse is passed. It is not till lonely seasons have revolved ; till joys which they would have shared, anxieties which they might have alleviated, events in which they would have their part, have all been our portion, and ours only ; till the grasp of welcome or congratulation has been long unfelt ; till the opinions we used to value, have been long unasked ; till we have stood in some trial of life, and felt the want of our accustomed counsellor and friend, that we thoroughly comprehend the world of separation and bereavement, contained in that short phrase, “ He is dead.”

David Stuart withdrew his eyes from the paper, and leaving his untasted and solitary meal, he walked to the window. Little Eleanor was in the garden, wandering sadly to and fro ; she paused as she perceived her

new acquaintance, and smiled mournfully. David called to her.

“ How is your mamma, Eleanor ? is she better ? ”

“ It is not my time yet to see mamma,” said the child ; “ but they tell me she is very ill because of that bad news, and that she will not come out of her dark dressing-room all day.”

“ Well, but you will see her in her room presently, and I want you to carry a letter to her ; wait for me.”

Taking a packet from the table, he passed from the open window into the garden and joined Eleanor : he led her by the hand in silence for a few steps, and sat down with her on a rustic bench.

“ Eleanor,” said he, “ your father told me you understood very easily what was said to you. This is his dying letter ; the last he

ever wrote ; and he was so weak that it took him three days to finish it ; and this other paper holds some of his hair. I wish you to take these to your mamma. I do not like to send them by one of the servants ; and I am a stranger, and perhaps your mamma may not wish to see me for some days, and yet there is something I must know before I go to town. Take them to her, and say that David Stuart sent you, and earnestly desires to know what he can do to serve and assist her in this bitter time of affliction. And try to comfort her, for remember she has nothing in the world now but you.”

“ And Godfrey, my brother — she has Godfrey ! I cannot comfort mamma as he could,—oh, no ;” and she shook her head, as her eyes filled with tears.

David Stuart looked at her with strange interest.

“ Well,” said he, gently, “ you can only do your best. Come to me in the library when you have given the letter, and tell me the answer.”

The little girl took the papers, and with a grave and earnest glance towards the still closed shutters of her mother’s room, she turned her steps towards the house. It was true, as her father had said, that her understanding was beyond her years; and she executed her message with a tact and fidelity which might have surprised those who have never witnessed the precocity both of feeling and comprehension, which children who are brought up alone, that is without companions of their own age, frequently display. She repeated, nearly in his own words, the short explanation he had given; put the packet into her mother’s hands, opened a part of the shutter to allow the light to fall

on the letter, and sat down on the low stool by her couch to await her reply.

Lady Raymond broke the seal, and through the bitter blinding tears which gushed from her eyes, she read the last farewell of him who had been to her, husband, father, protector, and friend. The letter ran as follows :

“ My beloved Clara,

“ It is now two days since Dr. Randolph informed me that I had better prepare for the worst ; and if I had any arrangements to make for you and my child, or any message to leave, that I should lose no time in committing them to paper. I am so weak to-day, that I begin to believe him ; and I write to you, though I can hardly think it possible that I am indeed to die without embracing you ! To die within so few days’ sail of England ! perhaps in sight of shore !

This is a very bitter trial ; but it is God's will, and we may not murmur. My health had been declining very rapidly for some months before I left India ; but knowing how delicate and easily alarmed you are, I forbore all mention of this in my letters, wishing that you should only hear of my illness, when you could nurse me through my expected recovery. I feel this concealment, alas ! will only make the blow of my death fall heavier upon you ; but you will forgive me, knowing that I meant all for the best, and that it was to spare you pain and anxiety that all was done. The news will be broken to you by one to whose tenderness I owe much ; the son of my old friend Stuart of Dunleath. I have already spoken of him so often in my letters home, that I hope he will scarcely seem a stranger. Your gentle nature will feel an interest in

him, as the son of the woman who was the object of my boyish adoration ; that most beautiful, most noble-hearted creature, whose vain efforts to stave off the ruin brought on by poor Stuart's reckless extravagance and vanity ; whose steady self-denial, calm courage, and devotion to her children; first taught me to value the worth of women, as it is the misfortune of some men, from less holy associations, to be unable to value them. Her death, and the forced sale of Dunleath, quite broke down what little nerve hard drinking and wearing anxieties had left to Stuart, and I believe he was in a sad state before he died. I think there is much of his mother in David. Personally he is her living image. When I proposed to him, in the wreck and ruin which surrounded him, to be my secretary, I half expected the Highland Laird's blood to revolt, as his father's did, at even a rational

scheme of independence. But I was mistaken. He has inherited his mother's patient energy, untiring sweetness of temper, and sane honest views of life. During the four years he has been with me (your absence leaving me only the shadow of a home) I have become attached to him as to a son, and he has shown me the devotion that might bless a father. I think, young as he is for such duties, I cannot leave the care of your destiny and that of little Eleanor in better hands. Her fortune will be large, for old Raymond of Raymondville, my Calcutta grand-uncle, whose property I have just inherited, wills that it shall descend to her. He left a large sum of ready money besides, which I was to employ in the purchase of land, or in any way I pleased.

“ My dear Clara, I have left fourteen thousand pounds of this money to your son

by your first marriage, Godfrey Marsden. I have left ten thousand to David Stuart. Eleanor will inherit from the Calcutta fortune certainly not less than five thousand a-year, and your income will exceed three thousand. I leave you, therefore, without suffering those worldly anxieties which often cumber and distress the souls of departing men. You will have to suffer none of the privations and struggles of your first widowhood, my poor gentle delicate Clara ! I am thankful also to be able to serve your son : the young Lieutenant may now, I think, marry Emma Fordyce, without the charge of imprudence. He stands high on the list for promotion. If his manhood fulfil the promise of the boy, you will have great cause to be proud of him : greater courage, and a sterner and more exact sense of duty I never saw in a young lad : God bless him for your sake.

And now God bless you, my Clara, for we are come to our last farewell ! God bless and take charge of you and my orphan child. God keep and sustain you through the first trial of bereavement, and the lone years to come. Strive to bow to His will, and put your trust in His mercy, as I do, even in this hour of unutterable dejection. There is a life beyond the grave, and we shall meet in a better world. In all temporal difficulties, great or small, David Stuart will take my place as your adviser and protector ; cherish him as you would cherish a brother ; teach my child to respect and look up to him ; and never forget that to his ear was whispered the blessing I pined to bestow on my distant wife and little one ; that his hand was the last that pressed the hand of the exile, whom it was God's will should die—in sight of shore !

His love and care have soothed the bitterness of the death-hour, as his fidelity and energy eased the last struggling years of my service in India. I do not know what more a son could have done for me than he has done; and as a son, rather than a friend, I bequeath you to him: a sacred trust, which he will sacredly fulfil. God bless you, now and ever, and God's will be done.

“Your affectionate husband,

“JOHN RAYMOND.”

A memorandum of the last moments of the good, generous-hearted protector she had lost, was appended to the letter. After writing it he had sunk rapidly, and many hours of the two lingering days which followed, passed in apparent unconsciousness.

On the third morning at sunrise he rallied a little, and begged to be carried on deck; some demur was made, on account of his state of excessive weakness. He smiled sadly at the surgeon, and said:

“This will be, as you well know, my last request.”

He was carried up in his hammock as he lay. The bright, glorious sunshine of morning dazzled his weak eyes, and he closed them for some minutes. Then, feebly pressing David Stuart’s hand, he pointed tremblingly to the white line of cliff already visible far over the sea.

“England!” said he, “Home!”

The plaintive tone entered Stuart’s heart like a sword. For a long time no other word was spoken. Then, some murmured observation on the delicious freshness of the

morning breeze, hovered on the lips of the dying man: then an hour of silence. The surge of the water as the ship cut her way through, and the flapping of some half-filled sail as the wind gradually fell to a calm, were the only sounds. The broad sun brightened over the ocean; the day wore on. Sir John Raymond sighed restlessly, then with sudden energy he said:

“Guard them truly, they are so helpless: my Clara—my poor little Eleanor—guard my Eleanor!”

It was the last quiver of the expiring lamp, and the lamp went out.

Eleanor returned to David Stuart with her mother’s vague broken-hearted answers. She did not know, she did not care, what was to be done. She left every-

thing to Mr. Stuart. She did not want to see him. She would rather not see him. There was nothing more to ask, or to know, or to care about, in this world. The funeral and the settlement of affairs were for him to arrange. She did not wish to read law-papers ; she would not understand them if she did. She understood her beloved husband's letter ; it told her all she wanted to know. She hoped, if Mr. Stuart was going away, he would come back and stay at Aspendale till she was better. She could not attend to anything ; her son Godfrey was at sea ; and she was afraid of dying, and leaving Eleanor alone in the house. Sir John had explained that Mr. Stuart was to act in his stead, and she hoped he would forgive her if she begged him not to leave her in this awful hour, more than was necessary.

She had rather not have little Eleanor with her much. She would rather be alone. She would be very thankful if Mr. Stuart would write to her son Godfrey, to tell him the dreadful news, and ask when his ship would return home. She was too ill to think about anything more. She begged Eleanor to leave her.

“ Helpless, indeed !” thought David Stuart ; as the child, not without tears, innocently repeated her mother’s broken sentences. Then, wiping her eyes, she said, “ But I will be no trouble to you ; indeed, if, as mamma thinks, you are going to be very busy, I think I could take some trouble for you. I could certainly write that letter to Godfrey ; Mr. Fordyce says I write very well ; or I could copy any letters for you ; I

copied once a whole sermon for Mr. Fordyce, and he gave me a Bible with silver clasps. He is my only friend. I am very dull when I cannot go to him. Will you let me do something for you? I would be glad to do anything for you, papa's friend."

The child timidly and yet tenderly laid her hand on his, and looked up in his face. David Stuart knew nothing of children. Pity, wonder, and a sort of embarrassment at the strangeness of his own position, kept him silent. He took her hand, and looked at it as if it had been a little white shell gathered on a strange shore; musing. The echo of her tender tone, calling him "Papa's friend," as if it were a name, lingered in his ear: the tears gathered in his eyes.

“Oh! Eleanor,” said he, “I loved your father, and he loved me; but I shall never be able to protect you as he would have done.”

CHAPTER V.

DAVID STUART'S WARD.

THE only other person named by Sir John Raymond as trustee, a distant relation of his own, had died in a fit of apoplexy, some time before the arrival of the Albion. David Stuart found himself therefore sole executor and guardian to Eleanor. Never was man more puzzled or more interested than he, with the charge of the little daughter of his benefactor. He marvelled at her intelligence; grown persons are apt to put

a lower estimate than is just, on the understandings of children. They rate them by what they know; and children know very little; but their capacity of comprehension is great. Hence the continual wonder of those who are unaccustomed to them, at the “old fashioned ways” of some lone little one who has no playfellows—and at the odd mixture of folly and wisdom in its sayings. A continual battle goes on in a child’s mind, between what it knows and what it comprehends. Its answers are foolish from partial ignorance, and wise from extreme quickness of apprehension. The great art of education is so to train this last faculty as neither to depress nor over exert it. The matured mediocrity of many an infant prodigy, proves both the degree of expansion to which it is possible to force a child’s intellect, and the boundary

which nature has set to the success of such false culture.

Eleanor Raymond might with little trouble have been trained into one of these diseased specimens of perfection. She was living in that melancholy exile, a child cleverer than the grown people round her ; and the efforts made by her mind, were like the efforts made by a plant to shoot upwards towards the air and light. Her “only friend,” as she expressed it, was old Mr. Fordyce, the clergyman of Aspendale, whose daughter was betrothed to her brother Godfrey. His heart had yearned towards the little neglected child, left so much by her invalided mother, to the care of her Hindoo Ayah and the servants of the household. As the half sister of the man to whom he was to entrust his own child’s future, Mr. Fordyce thought it his “boun-

den duty" to do what he could for Eleanor. Good old Mr. Fordyce ! he thought it was his duty to give up his whole life to the service of his fellow creatures, and the little time he was able to spare from his avocations as parish priest, had for the last three years been devoted to Eleanor, ever since one day, when passing through the garden he found the child sitting staring listlessly at some sunflowers, with so sad an expression in her eyes that he inquired what was the matter. Nothing was the matter, but she had no book to read, no one to talk with, nothing to do, and her mother was too languid to have her constantly in the room with her.

David Stuart followed Mr. Fordyce's footsteps. In that very garden, shaded from the sunshine by an old yew, at the end of one of the broad gravelled walks, little Eleanor read

to her guardian the sermon she had copied. No monk who ever executed an illuminated manuscript, in times when such works were a marvel of beauty and tedious care, could feel more pride in the completion of his task than she did. No lover ever listened at twilight to the voice of his ladye fair, with more rapt and tender attention than David Stuart to the voice of the child.

“The text is, ‘*unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.*’ You must remember the text,” said she.

David Stuart did remember it. Years afterwards, when many other memories were swept from his mind like the traces on sand beneath the waves, he yet remembered that text, and the reading of old Mr. Fordyce’s sermon !

With Mr. Fordyce himself, he formed a close friendship. It was a great pleasure,

a mutual pleasure, this meeting of two cultivated minds, in the retirement of Aspendale ; and the old man was never so cheerful as when Mr. Stuart came to the Rectory, and sat with him in the little parlour he had fitted up as a library.

David belonged, too, to a family well known to Mr. Fordyce in early life. He was a Scotchman, and there is a brotherhood among Scotchmen, which the English, (as far as I have seen in various corners of the world) carefully avoid imitating.

The old clergyman thought David Stuart so charming, that he wished he had a son like him ; and in the recesses of his simple heart, he questioned whether it was prudent to allow his little common-place daughter Emma, to compare him so constantly with her recollections of Godfrey Marsden. It

was a needless fear. The little commonplace daughter never gave David Stuart a thought, further than being glad her father had found a pleasant companion; but her thoughts wandered very often from all objects round her, to the visionary image of a ship sailing homewards, indifferently manned by the one sole image of its first lieutenant.

The orphan child of Sir John Raymond, was a frequent subject of discussion between her new friend and her old one. She threw off under their mutual tutelage, and from being a very grave reserved child, became very gay and playful. She was no longer in a sort of prison, body and soul; she had escaped from the palisades of mediocrity which surrounded her mind, just as she had gained the privilege of walk-

ing past the park and garden, down to the wild broken scenery of a spot called the roaring Linn ; a spot greatly admired by tourists ; where a waterfall of great height, flinging itself for ever into the great, black, shining pool below, filled her young imagination with pleasurable awe.

For some time it had been a question whether she ought not to have a governess ; but months crept on : Lady Raymond seemed to droop more and more under the burden of her great sorrow ; David Stuart remained, by her earnest request, domiciled at Aspendale ; and no new arrangements were entered into. Till Lady Raymond's health amended, till he left Aspendale, he would educate the child of his benefactor himself. He had no profession, no employment, nothing to call him from this duty. Since

the ruin of his father, the death of his mother, and the sale of Dunleath, he had had no occupation but that of being Sir John Raymond's secretary. His only occupation now, was that of Eleanor's guardian. Dear little child, why not be her tutor and guardian in one? Why avail himself so formally of his right, as to make her over immediately to a stranger? It would be time enough to think about governesses when he left Aspendale.

It was settled then, that Eleanor and David Stuart should be constant companions. His meals were no longer solitary. Her light feet tripped along the path, in his after-dinner saunter in the beautiful garden. Her eyes looked gladly across the breakfast-table, proud of being allowed to make tea for him. Her small, glossy head might be seen bending over its book in a corner of the library,

whenever he looked up from his own studies. Dearly he loved the child ; dearly he loved those eyes that were so like her father's, but without the shadows of care and anxiety, which had darkened his well-remembered glance.

A child's eyes ! those clear wells of undefiled thought, what on earth can be more beautiful ? Full of hope, love, and curiosity, they meet your own. In prayer, how earnest ; in joy, how sparkling ; in sympathy, how tender : the man who never tried the companionship of a little child, has carelessly passed by one of the great pleasures of life, as one passes a rare flower, without plucking it or knowing its value. A child cannot understand you, you think. Speak to it of the holy things of your religion, of your grief for the loss of a friend, of your love for some one you fear will not love in return :—it will take,

it is true, no measure or soundings of your thought ; it will not judge how much you should believe ; whether your grief is rational in proportion to your loss ; whether you are worthy or fit to attract the love which you seek ; but its whole soul will incline to yours, and engraft itself, as it were, on the feeling which is your feeling for the hour. David Stuart had not been three months in the house, before little Eleanor comprehended, that the most loving memory of his heart was the memory of his mother—the great grief of his heart, the loss of Dunleath. She thought much and tenderly of people and places she had never seen. She loved to read descriptions of Highland scenery. Every nook in Walter Scott's novels was a shadow of Dunleath. She loved to listen to her guardian's account of boyish days, when his mother taught him ; the lesson-books lying

on a beautiful sculptured sun-dial, which had once been a Greek altar, and which his father had imported at great expense, with many copies of celebrated statues, from Italy. She loved to hear him describe Dunleath, as it was then ; so cared for, so adorned ; and she loved to hear him describe it as it was the last melancholy day he saw it, after it had been vainly advertised for sale by the writer who had bought it ; after Stuart had been long away, and only returned to look at it before he sailed for India. How, then, all was forlorn, neglected, and deserted ; how the heavy untrained roses lay tangled across the damp green paths, and the passion-flowers hung broken from the walls ; how the statues stood gleaming under the firs, like ghosts of past prosperity ; how the weeds and nettles had so sprung up by the sun-dial and his mother's favourite seat, that he stopped to

root them up, and kissed the dial where she had so often leaned her beautiful head on her hand, watching the children at play. He spoke of his brothers, and a sister, all now dead. He repeated to Eleanor that touching and perfect poem of Mrs. Hemans, "The Graves of a Household," and explained how it was, that although

"They grew together side by side,
And filled one home with glee,
Their graves were severed far and wide,
By mount, and stream, and sea."

He felt no embarrassment at describing these things to the little child, as he would have felt with one of his own age; nor was he ashamed to shed tears before her. Perhaps, some of the most soothing moments he had experienced for years, were spent in this outpouring of the heart to one who compreh-

hended nothing but his grief. She knew not his broken-hearted mother's trials, his selfish father's extravagance. She only knew that Dunleath was lovely ; that it had passed away into the hands of the stranger ; that her guardian had no mother, sister, or parents now. And oh ! what a world of compassion swelled up from the pure fountain of the child's heart, as she listened to the sorrows of the grown man !

Day by day this strange tranquil life glided on. Lady Raymond lived sorrowful and secluded. David Stuart visited Mr. Fordyce, and taught and trained his dead benefactor's child. Some curiosity was excited in the neighbourhood about Sir John Raymond's secretary, but it soon died away. He neither seemed to seek nor to shun acquaintances—but it was evident he had no interest in anything out of Aspendale. He studied much ; he

sketched ; he played the piano ; an accomplishment, common among foreigners though rare among our own countrymen, which he had acquired from his mother in his desultory education at Dunleath. He went out to the Rectory, and was welcomed by the pious old man ; he came home to Aspendale, and was welcomed by the fond little girl. It was an innocent, a happy time ; happier than any he had ever known since Dunleath was sold to strangers, and his mother laid in her grave —happier, perhaps, than he ever knew again in all the years of a prolonged life.

CHAPTER VI.

EDUCATION.

IT was winter: the crisp snow lay on the broad gravel walks in the garden, and icicles hung on the cold black bushes that grew by the roaring Linn, when little Eleanor, with a flushed cheek and an anxious countenance, entered the library where her guardian was reading.

“ Guardie,” said she abruptly, “ news is come from Godfrey; his ship is on its way home; he will be here soon; mamma is very glad. Oh! I ought not to think of

myself at such a time, but I am never much to mamma, and now you will see I shall be *nothing*."

She pressed her slender hands on her eyes, and sobbed aloud. David Stuart was surprised and disturbed.

"Are you jealous of your brother? you, my little good Eleanor. I could not have believed it."

"No, no, I am not jealous; I am sure I am not. It is he—that is, I cannot explain—but he always corrects me, and thinks me foolish, and points out to mamma what he thinks are my faults; and mamma is so fond of him, oh! so fond; you cannot think how fond she is of Godfrey: wait till you see."

Lieutenant Marsden arrived, and David Stuart *did* see how fond the poor feeble widow was of her son. There is, among some statistical records of madness lately published, an account of a woman who went mad from pride in her child, and imagined

herself the mother of one of the seraphim. Lady Raymond just stopped short of the point of insanity. She did not imagine herself the mother of a seraph, but she certainly thought human perfection had reached its *acme*, in the good-looking, stern, square-shouldered young officer she had the happiness to call her son. What he said was law ; his very step had a quarter-deck brevity and decision about it, as if he were for ever about to issue a command. He treated his mother with a protecting and superior tenderness, which he reversed into a stern criticism for every other human being, not excepting his affianced bride. He treated Eleanor, as his father had treated his mother during their brief unhappy union ; in days he could not remember, but of which he gave in his own manner so exact a copy, as sometimes surprises those who think habits are not hereditary, and who will not admit that habits are in fact a part

of our nature and disposition : the outward covering of the soul.

Lady Raymond again, gave an example of a yet more marvellous and equally common working of the human heart. She idolised the son, who was the exact counterpart of the husband who had seemed odious to her. She never perceived or admitted, that there was tyranny or injustice in that method of treating Eleanor which she herself had once found it so difficult to endure. She was proud of her son ; proud of his unflinching endurance of hardship, and courage in danger ; proud of his seamanship and acknowledged ability in his profession ; proud of his stern uncompromising rectitude ; proud even of his looks, and his personal strength ; proud of his familiar acquaintance with every line of Holy Writ ; proud of the pharisaical excellence of his conduct and character.

And in all these various causes of pride,

Godfrey Marsden concurred. He was clothed (under his lieutenant's uniform) in a perfect panoply of self-satisfaction. If he set himself up as a judge of all other men, it was that he was better than all other men, and he knew it. To say that his little common-place Emma concurred also in these views, would be to express but feebly the entire and undoubted conviction in her mind that he was a faultless model of what man should be. Most unnecessary would it have been to preach to her the text, "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands." She had been a dutiful submissive child to her fond benevolent father, and she was prepared to be a submissive wife to her lover. In her heart, so far from regretting the indulgence of her first home, or looking with awe to the second, she thought there was something grand in Godfrey's sternness. Feeble natures respect even exaggerated energies ; the contrast strikes them as a superiority.

David Stuart found himself almost immediately in collision, as it were, with the son of Sir John Raymond's widow. Perfect tact, natural sweetness of temper, and a strong anxiety not to offend or grieve the poor sorrowful faded being whose face, since the return of the young sailor, had begun to wear unwonted smiles, in vain contended in his heart with the position into which he was suddenly thrown. Godfrey, who appeared somewhat surprised at finding him a resident at Aspendale, cross-questioned him about Sir John Raymond's affairs, as though he were appointed merely to transact business, and arrange for Lady Raymond. He prefaced his questions always by saying :

“It is necessary, in order that I may know exactly how to advise my mother as to her future plans, that I should be made aware, &c.”

He interfered in every step that had been taken, or was proposed to be taken, for little

Eleanor. He ridiculed the notion of a man educating a girl, and named a lady (sister to the first mate on board his own ship) as an eligible governess. He found fault ; he argued ; he catechised. He scolded the little girl incessantly ; sometimes for being too shy, sometimes for being too bold, sometimes for being indolent, sometimes for romping ; twice, till she wept, for not knowing the sense of some erudite Scriptural quotation ; once, for the involuntary error of being too tall for her age. David Stuart thought Lady Raymond's son perfectly insufferable. Lady Raymond began to fear her little daughter would require a very strict governess indeed.

Fortunately the preparations for his marriage stopped these experimental cruises of Godfrey's, by directing his thoughts to one desired haven. The liberal bequest of Sir John Raymond had enabled him to fulfil his engagement with Emma Fordyce sooner

than he hoped, and the young stern sailor was very happy. So was Lady Raymond. So was Emma.

Somehow little Eleanor caught a cold and fever about this time. David Stuart thought the church had been too chill for her, the day of the wedding. Godfrey Marsden held, that she had sickened the day after she visited some poor cottages in the neighbourhood. He objected to these visitings. It encouraged the poor to depend on uncertain resources, on the aid of their richer neighbours.

“ I am of opinion that their richer neighbours ought to help them, and that the reliance you speak of is a bond of union between the upper and lower classes,” said David.

“ You destroy all industry and independence, that’s all I mean to say.”

“ My dear Mr. Marsden, there is much talk of the self-dependence of the poor: I

wish we could point to the self-dependence of the rich, as an example for them to imitate ; and not reserve even begging, on a large scale, as an indulgence sacred to the gentry. Which of us can say they never at any time asked aid ? Not perhaps in money, but a word from a great man, or——”

“ I can ;” interrupted Godfrey ; “ and I tell you, you will pauperise the whole village, besides teaching my sister false notions of her duty to the poor. What has she to do with the poor of Aspendale ?”

David Stuart smiled and sighed. He was thinking of the assistance to Godfrey’s whole destiny and fortune, which Sir John Raymond had given. He answered quietly, however :

“ I teach your sister those duties as I understand them, and as Mr. Fordyce understands them ; I teach her to do as much rational good as she can, in the circle round her. It is little any individual can do, but if all did their best, we should have a star-

light night of it, instead of groping our way in darkness. Eleanor is at present resident at Aspendale, and wherever she happens to be resident, there the poor have a claim upon her."

"Mr. Fordyce is the clergyman of the parish, and it is his business to visit the sick and the poor ; it is not Eleanor's business."

"And you think personal communion with the poor should be confined to the clergyman of the parish ? Pshaw !" said David Stuart, impatiently, as he turned over the leaves of his book.

"I think," answered Godfrey, doggedly, "that Eleanor has caught the scarlet fever in those cottages, and so you will find."

Some fever Eleanor certainly had ; though the doctor said it was nervous, not infectious ; and David Stuart was very near adding to his growing experience of a child's perfections, the experience (never to be forgotten by those who have witnessed it) of

the beauty, the touching beauty, of a child's death-bed scenes : its undoubting piety—its patience under pain—its tender farewells to all friends on earth—its loving trust to meet all in heaven—its meek apologies for trouble given—its simple, fervent, eloquent prayers. Ah ! who that has once seen these things can forget them, or fail to remember also the text which affirms of children, that their angels do always behold the face of the Almighty in glory ?

It pleased God, in this instance, to spare the life of the child ; perhaps for the after-trial of the man. While it lay ill, David Stuart watched and prayed all day and all night. For ten nights, of suffering and delirium followed by utter prostration of strength, he never left his little charge. He wrote words of comfort and encouragement to her terrified and drooping mother, which were fumigated and forwarded from one room to another by Godfrey ; who, in spite of the doctor's

opinion, persisted that there was a risk of infection, which he would not permit Lady Raymond to run ; useless as she must be in the sick room from her own feeble condition of health. Meanwhile Eleanor's guardian scarcely touched food : and he was himself amazed at the anguish with which he thought of the possible death of this fragile, tender-hearted child. She did not die : she recovered : she said to him :

“ I shall never hear the sound of a person writing ; the sound of the pen passing over the paper, without pleasure. When I was too weak to speak, or even to open my eyes, I heard you writing ; I knew there was some one in the room who loved me, and was taking care of me. Dear Guardie, when my head was confused, I thought you were my good angel, and were writing in a book all I had done to offend God, and that then you prayed it might not be reckoned against me. That was a dream ;

but you did pray for me, very often ; I saw you kneeling and praying for me. Oh ! I am so glad to be spared ! Pray for me now, that I may make good use of life."

With tearful eyes, and the small white hand folded in his own, David knelt and prayed ; and the pale child whispered "Amen."

That day he dined down stairs with the rest of the family. As he took his place at table, looking weary, and haggard, and happy ; his long watching and its successful result equally legible in his countenance ; Godfrey said :

" Well, Mr. Stuart, I hope this will be a warning to you, and that you will not again take Eleanor to those sort of places ; you were near costing my mother a great sorrow."

David Stuart was mortal ; not an angel, as in Eleanor's dream ; and he felt irritated at this speech. He was exceedingly weary,

and nothing makes men so peevish as fatigue. He did not believe Eleanor caught the fever in the cottages ; and he *did* secretly believe that no one would have lamented her as much as himself. He answered shortly, that he had already explained himself on this matter, and that what had occurred had in no way altered his opinion.

“ Then give me leave to say, that my mother ought to control Eleanor. It is absurd to bring her up in this way—quite absurd !”

“ Mr. Marsden,” said David Stuart, “ I shall teach Eleanor what I think it best for her to learn. One thing I certainly never will teach her ; that she is to sit, as we sit here to-day, warm, covered, eating a good dinner by the light of wax-tapers, while within a stone’s throw of the Park gate, some poor hungry sickly wretch is lying, whose suffering she is not to meddle with, because the principles of political

economy preach the independence of the poor."

" You teach her absurd crotchets ! She never can alter the state of things. The poor are never to cease out of the land. If I had the guiding of Eleanor—"

David Stuart was fallible ; and his fallibility became suddenly apparent.

" Boy," said he passionately, to the amazed Lieutenant, " I have borne much from you ; and I would thank you to remember, now and henceforward, that Sir John Raymond left me guardian to his daughter, not *you*. You forget yourself."

The pride, the passion, the sudden flash of the haughty eye, struck upon all like an electric shock. Lady Raymond burst into tears. Emma stared, with her gentle, foolish eyes, till she looked quite stupefied.

" Forgive me," said David Stuart, " I

am grieved, most grieved to have agitated Lady Raymond," and he left the room.

"Ah!" thought he, as he slowly ascended the staircase, and opened the door of Eleanor's chamber, "is it possible that I, who an hour ago prayed with this poor child, should quarrel about her? Is it possible that, after supplicating for strength against the temptations of a whole life, I cannot command even the slight momentary temptation of anger against one of her relations! What would my poor mother have thought of this scene?"

There was much of his mother's nature in David, but the alloy of his father's blood was there also. The nerve and untiring energy which enabled Mrs. Stuart of Dunleath for years to stem a flood of ruin, he had; but not her patient self-denial, her unswerving purpose. Her enthusiasm, her tenderness, her wide sympathy and indulgence for all her fellow-creatures, he had; but not her self-government. The pang of remorse ever fol-

lowed in his heart the commission of error, but the new error was not certainly avoided. He was like a fair ship, well trimmed, with all her sails, masts, and cordage complete ; her rudder and compass to steer, but no anchor to hold by when all was done.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTENDING INTERESTS.

AND so it was, that a mutual dislike sprang up between Godfrey Marsden and David Stuart. The latter contrasted the ungracious manner and airs of authority of the young sailor, with the tenderness, confidence, and often-repeated expressions of gratitude of Sir John Raymond; and the interference of Captain Marsden in his guardianship of Eleanor Raymond, appeared the most unwarrantable assumption that ever was at-

tempted. Godfrey, on the other hand, saw his mother a complete cypher in her own house, and the real master of Aspendale stand admitted in Sir John Raymond's secretary. Of Sir John he remembered little, and that little was untinged by any great sentiment of affection.

Lieutenant Marsden had chosen his profession, it is true, and he loved it; still, a boy who is sent to sea on the occasion of his mother's second marriage, will be very apt to connect the two events in his mind as dependent on each other. He had seen little or nothing of home since that date. He had roughed out those intervening years among rough men. He had, as sailors themselves graphically express it, been “knocking about at sea” ever since. His character, naturally hard and imperious, had followed its bent. Like the heel by which Thetis held Achilles, when she dipped that hero in the Styx, there was but one soft spot in Godfrey's

heart, and that was love for his mother. Even his choice of a wife had been influenced by finding his common-place Emma an attentive and favourite visitor at Aspendale, where few visitors were welcome. He took the bequest of Sir John Raymond as something done to please his mother, whom too much could not be done to please. He felt no particular gratitude. He did not see that the occasion called for any. The affliction of the feeble widow was grief to him ; the death of his step-father was none.

Godfrey had a painful instinct that Lady Raymond had never loved his own father, as she had loved Sir John Raymond ; and now there was no one she loved as fervently as Godfrey ; for he was conscious that the affection bestowed on his little half-sister would bear no comparison with that she bestowed on himself. Lady Raymond was

passively tender and gentle to Eleanor, because it was her nature to be passively tender and gentle to all things; but she loved her less than the memory of the little boy who was buried in an Indian grave; less, far less, than the stern son of the yet sterner husband of her youth. There are women who are incapable of loving their daughters as well as their sons, just as there are men who cannot love their sons as they do their daughters. Let metaphysicians account for it. The fact is so. Something there may be in that leaning to contrasts, so salient in the human heart. The feeble fragile woman was proud of being Godfrey's mother: there was nothing to be proud of in being the mother of Eleanor. Whatever aversion might however exist between her son and the man to whom her late husband had confided their daughter, Lady Raymond was troubled with no further

evidence of it. Godfrey comprehended (after much weeping, and the expression of hypochondriacal terrors on his mother's part, which sounded to the young sailor very like the explanation of a child who is afraid to be left alone in the dark), that it suited Lady Raymond that Eleanor's guardian should remain at Aspendale ; and, as she expressed it, “ take all the dreadful responsibility off her hands.” He, therefore, gloomily acquiesced in what appeared to him a most preposterous arrangement ; and showed what disposition he could, to keep on friendly terms with Mr. Stuart.

He left to David (who was cast in a gentler mould, and whose heart smote him sorely for the tears he had wrung by a rash sentence from his benefactor's widow) the task of that daily and petty self-command, which is more irksome to our wayward nature than great occasional sacrifices. David watched himself ; he endeavoured to like

Godfrey ; and Godfrey condescended to bear with him.

Lieutenant Marsden's stay on the present occasion did not greatly exceed a year ; and, if truth must be told, he became a little restless and anxious to be afloat, even before he was appointed to another ship. Habit is second nature ; and his second nature was to be tossed about by winds and waves ; passing with more or less speed over the blank waste of the mighty ocean, or along dimly-seen coasts whose pale blue outline by day, and starlike light-houses by night, give such guidance to an otherwise trackless course, as was given of old by the pillar of cloud and fire in Scripture ; and in a manner which seems almost as miraculous to the uninitiated. He left to his common-place Emma, the holy and innocent occupation of a mother's care of their infant son ; which she proceeded to fulfil, calmly kindly and faithfully, as she did all the other duties of her tranquil life.

She loved her stern husband, and wept at the thoughts of parting from him. When reproved however by Godfrey for her tears, which he affirmed were not only childish, but an offence to God and to himself, she dried them ; and only the baby, on whose face the drops fell, as she turned from the park gate, after seeing Godfrey start by the mail for Portsmouth, was conscious of her renewed temporary disobedience.

It was a relief to David Stuart when Godfrey Marsden went ; and so it was to Eleanor ; though her half-brother had tormented her less of late, partly mollified by her submission, and partly occupied with his wife's situation and his own prospects of employment. Closer and closer the bond was knit, that bound the guardian and ward together. Hard study, and lighter accomplishments, walks, rides, and the cavilled at visitings in

the cottages of the poor, filled up the happy days.

It was pleasant to Eleanor to sit and listen to David Stuart reading the Scriptures to the aged and dying; pleasant to hear his kind patient answers, his simple eloquent explanations, his method of informing and entertaining a class of sufferers, who, with few friends and no books, lie through the long days of sickness listlessly gazing at a blank cottage-wall. It was pleasant to her to ride over the craggy heath, and along shadowy summer lanes, mounted on the beautiful pony he had chosen for her. Pleasant to wander on the lovely evenings that closed a sultry day, down to the roaring Linn, and sit there among the fern and moss-covered rocks. Pleasant to cultivate flowers raised from Indian seeds, and watch their strange tropic splendours come out along the greenhouse

walls. Pleasant the music on winter evenings ; the sketches made while favourite books were read aloud.

And all this went quietly on, till Eleanor was fifteen, and she had had no governess !

In his heart, David Stuart was not a little vain of the result of his apprenticeship in education. Eleanor was as sensible and well-informed as it was possible for a girl to be : a more charming companion no man could have desired to find in a wife : one more pure-hearted and amiable no man would have wished to call daughter. Lady Raymond was pleased and grateful ; she had become gradually more cheerful ; and the little family circle was as comfortable as a family circle could be.

It was about this time that the announcement of an obscure death, in the papers woke throbbing echoes in David Stuart's heart ; and in Eleanor's for his sake. It was the death of Mr. Peter Christison, writer, of Edinburgh.

He had been the last surviving trustee in a Scotch trust, involving the principal portion of the property of the late Mr. Stuart of Dunleath. A Scotch trust is proverbially ruinous to those who are dependent upon it. Scotch writers and trustees occasionally make large and rapid fortunes. I should be loath to draw any inference which might, in this particular instance, seem to imply a connection between these two facts, but it is certain that while the fortunes entrusted to Mr. Christison's management gradually diminished, his own gradually increased. Indeed the augmentation on the one side bore so exact a proportion to the diminution on the other, that a simple person might be excused for imagining he perhaps enriched himself at the expense of those whose interests he was bound to protect.

The beautiful unhappy Mrs. Stuart of Dunleath once remarked to him, while wearying through accounts which her husband would never examine: “Mr. Christi-

son, there must be either great carelessness or absolute cheating somewhere."

"Eh ! Mistress Stuart ! there may be carelessness, Ma'am ; but ye'll no suppose—"

"Carelessness is cheating on the part of a man of business," observed the lady ; and the observation never was forgotten, or forgiven.

How the money went, no one exactly knew. Mr. Stuart kept open house, and did not keep any accounts. He was fond of travelling, fond of pictures, statues, Scagliola marbles, everything of which the purchase is enormous, and the transport doubles the purchase money. And he bought, and transported to Dunleath, whatever he had a mind to. Never was Stuart of Dunleath known to deny himself a wish, or to reason upon its prudence. He planned beautiful new greenhouses when he could scarcely command money enough to pay his gardener's wages ;

and he placed antique statues, draped and undraped, at intervals along his lawn, long after he had ceased to meet his tailor's bills. Why he could not pay his gardener, or his tailor, was attempted to be shown (or concealed) in very lengthy and complex accounts ; but to the last Mr. Stuart could never be brought to look these over.

“ We're ruined, my dear, and that's enough,” said he, moodily ; “ and we'll go and live at Palermo. Palermo's just a beautiful place.”

I cannot expect my readers to have more patience about the exact position of Mr. Stuart's affairs than he had himself. But the brief result of the complex accounts was, that the owner sold Dunleath, and the writer bought it.

It is the brief result of many Scotch trust accounts.

Mr. Stuart died, and left nothing to his son. Mr. Peter Christison died, and left

Dunleath to his widow ; and now Mrs. Peter wanted to sell Dunleath, for she thought it would be less “lonesome” to live in Edinburgh, than in that paradise of David Stuart’s childhood. Fain, fain would David have gratified the widow, by taking it off her hands ; but he had not a sixpence in the world beyond Sir John Raymond’s bequest, and three times that amount would not have bought Dunleath.

“ I declare,” said he to Eleanor, “ I could be satisfied to die the week after, only to tread the heather once more, calling the land my own. Home is home anywhere ; but rely upon it, there is something in the freedom, wildness, and beauty of a mountainous country, which nurses the love of home into a passion. It is so with the Swiss : remember the fact told in the movements of the allied armies, that the mountain airs peculiar to Switzerland were forbidden to be played to the troops, on the plea that they woke so

wild a regret in the men's hearts, that they caused fever, desertions, and deaths. So also, at one time, the playing of the air 'Farewell to Lochaber' was forbidden among the Highland regiments in America. I understand this. I cannot describe to you the sensations with which I have sometimes thought of Dunleath. In India especially, in that oppressive climate, under that sultry sun, I have sometimes thought of the lake, the fir trees, and the blue hills beyond, till my yearning amounted to madness!"

"But you may regain Dunleath," said Eleanor, gently. "Remember Lord Clive; remember how many instances there are of that sort; we never know what the chances of life may bring."

And in her heart Eleanor wondered (since she certainly was an heiress) whether she could not buy Dunleath and bestow it on her guardian. She had a very vague notion of what the cost of such a magnificent gift would be,

but she knew she had a very large fortune. With an innocent fear lest he should guess her thought, she forbore from asking either of the leading questions which might have resolved these doubts. Only she dreamed more than ever of the place she had never seen, and she copied every sketch and fragment David Stuart had preserved of the scenery there: the sun-dial that had been a Greek altar, with the blue lake and mountains beyond—clumps of old firs with bronzed stems and stern crooked branches cutting the clear sky—great grey stones and moss-covered rocks, round which the stream went gurgling and foaming down the glen—patches of glorious colour where the scarlet rowan and silver larch, and trees of all autumnal shades, bent over the white spray of the waterfall—still black tarns, that lay among the mountains without a shore, edged only by the soft peat, and heather with its scanty herbage,—wild glens,—long outlines of purple hills with clouds and

mists lying over their summits and along their sides,—all these did Eleanor's skilful pencil reproduce. And the most successful of them she framed and hung up; so that any one coming into Miss Raymond's dressing-room, would have imagined her whole life had been passed in the Highlands.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELEANOR'S GUARDIAN ABSENTS HIMSELF.

WHETHER it was from brooding over the chances consequent on Mr. Peter Christison's death, or other causes, David Stuart became sad and restless. He was absent on business much more frequently than formerly, and for much longer periods. At last one day he bid Eleanor good bye, with the unwelecome intimation that he should be away for a month.

“ You are beginning to be a very truant guardian,” said she, half sadly, half playfully ; “ I shall go back in all my schooling.”

David looked at her, and sighed.

It is to wean you, my little Eleanor ; you know when you are one-and-twenty, or sooner, if you marry with my consent, my guardianship ceases. We cannot always be together ; I wish we could."

These words made a terrible impression upon Eleanor. They pursued her with a melancholy echo :

" We cannot always be together."

She wept when her guardian was gone, and went to take a solitary musing walk down the lime avenue, haunted by disturbed fancies half sweet, and half bitter. The days when she was a little child came back to her ; she saw her former self wandering alone in the sunny garden, chasing the butterflies, and listening to the clear song of the birds above her head, yearning for some little companion to play with and talk to. Then the first pleasant walks with her guardian recurred to memory. The gentle

kindness of his explanations ; his smile of amused delight at her answers ; his curiosity to know what she thought and understood. The expression of his countenance at other times, intently reading ; undisturbed by, and unconscious of her approach, or noticing it as little as the fluttering of a bird's wing, or the dancing of a bough in the breeze. Then his image would suddenly present itself, waiting for her at the opening of the lime avenue ; tired of studious contemplation ; calling her to come back, and rove through the forest glade to the rocks by the roaring Linn. His tall slight figure seemed to stand under the arch of those meeting branches, the half-closed book in his hands, his brows knit that his dazzled eyes might distinguish among the flowers and sunshine, the white frock and blue sash of his little ward. Then the pleasant wanderings in more recent days ; the sound of the doves murmuring in the wood ; the springing away of the startled deer

in the open park in their long evening rides, when David Stuart would describe Dunleath, or speak of his father, with a voice that sometimes faltered in its tone.

Oh, how full of embarrassment had Eleanor felt at such times ; riding silently on, in the deepening twilight by his side, and stealing shy glances at his severely beautiful profile, drawn as it seemed against the evening sky ; till he would turn, and smile kindly at her, and talk of other things. Noble deeds and hair-breadth escapes, foreign lands, wild superstitions, books of imagination and of real history : what was there they had not talked of, that was within her comprehension ?

“ Ah ! happy life ! ” thought Eleanor Raymond, as she pursued her now lonely walk ; and with the conviction of its happiness came a vague and uncertain dread for the future. Her guardian was gone ; he alluded to future absences ; and not only to these, but he had

spoken, as of a fixed and unalterable certainty, of the time when his presence at Aspendale would no longer be necessary.

The day was to come, then, when they were to part—they who had lived so long in close companionship ! He was not a father, or a brother, whose society she was certain to enjoy at intervals as long as life endured ; he was only her guardian ; when she should attain the age of twenty-one (or sooner, if she married with his consent), her guardian's power ceased. Eleanor inwardly vowed never to marry ; and she counted the years that intervened between fifteen and twenty-one. Six years ; it was a long time to look forward to. But then, had she not already passed five in his society, and they seemed but as a day ? Eleanor grew sad as she thought of the speed with which those other six years might pass ; for then, what a blank—what a dreary void—what a life in vain—would life be without her guardian ! She almost wished

she might die before she was twenty-one, or just afterwards ; on her one-and-twentieth birthday, perhaps, and how sorry David Stuart would be ! The tears positively rushed into Eleanor's eyes, as she imaged the grief her guardian would experience at her death. And then she wondered whether, after she was laid in the grave, he would miss her much—whether he would miss her always, as she missed him ; reading, walking, riding, and thinking.

And then came a doubt into Eleanor's mind, whether such a gentle and considerate sorrow as she trusted her kind guardian would feel for her, would not be comforted in time : and then another thought,—who would comfort him ? and who would fill her place ? And Eleanor felt less resigned to die, and more anxious than ever she had been before to know who were David Stuart's friends, and what his amusements and occupations when away from Aspendale.

These contemplations occupied Eleanor greatly. They were continual, but she did not find them monotonous ; they were foolish, but she was not conscious of their folly.

One morning, when instead of eating her breakfast, she was calculating the exact day of David's return, the old butler broke in upon her meditations, by presenting her with a letter. To Eleanor, who knew scarcely any one, and had never been from home, a letter was an event ; and she took it with a slight blush of expectation and curiosity. It was from her guardian, the first she had received from him—

London, June 13th.

“ My dear Eleanor,

“ I find my absence will be prolonged beyond what I expected. I am going to Scotland—to Edinburgh—to transact some tedious business ; it is therefore my wish that you should write to me from time to

time, that I may know how you are going on. You can continue your German translations ; I will look them over when we meet. You can also practise your drawing ; taking more pains with the rules of perspective, and trusting less to the accuracy of your eye. Let Gibbon rest till I continue it with you ; careless reading will not profit you ; and I fear it requires all your awe of my authority to fix your attention on that great work. I will answer all your letters punctually, however busy I may be. Remember me to Lady Raymond, whose health is, I trust, as usual. God bless you.

“ D. STUART.”

Analaschar, when he shivered his stock in trade, while dreaming of future prosperity, could not have felt a more sudden revulsion of bitterness than Eleanor Raymond, as she concluded this brief and unwelcome epistle. It had been received at a moment when her

fancy and tenderness were wrought to the highest pitch. She felt jarred and offended. She had just been hoping for the day of his return, and he informed her of his indefinitely-prolonged absence, without one line of regret or one expression which might be construed into a wish that he were at Aspendale instead of Edinburgh ! She felt as if some dear friend had suddenly refused her in the harshest terms a favour she had counted upon ; and after struggling for a moment, she burst into tears.

Time, however, which has no respect either for joy or sorrow, but rolls on with silent and unfeet speed, slacked not his pace for David Stuart's absence. Eleanor found the usual hours easily occupied by her usual studies, and amusements ; and the privilege of corresponding with her guardian, a novel and delightful pleasure. She treasured up his letters in a sandal-wood box, and she

read them over every day. They had become quite a little series before David returned ; and in the interim Godfrey Marsden's arrival gladdened his mother and wife. Of his half-sister he took little notice, and he was of opinion that his baby should be corrected for crying when it was brought to greet him, whether it recognised him or not. Eleanor was sitting with Emma, Godfrey, and her mother, at the open folding-doors of the terrace-window, when another arrival took place. She started up, and running down the steps, embraced her guardian with eager gladness. As he kissed her cheek, he said :

“ Eleanor, I have brought you a Highland greyhound.”

Who is there, who has not, while listening to the most insignificant sentence, felt that suffering of which we know not the cause, emotion of which we cannot sound the depth,

deserved or undeserved displeasure, or boundless and unconfessed affection, have so altered the speaker's voice, that we can neither forget nor overcome the impression? Such was the strange feeling with which Eleanor listened to the first words spoken by her guardian. The words were nothing; they were kind, they were simple; but the tone! What sorrow—what bitterness—was in the tone of his voice! It was only for a moment; as if conscious of it, he said, gently:

“The dog is a little large and rough for a lady's pet; but he is a good and noble creature, and will make an excellent companion in your walks and rides.”

“He shall never leave me,” said Eleanor, earnestly. “He shall be my guardian, always, when you are away; and defend and protect me from all dangers.”

As she spoke, she turned her face with a smile to the giver; he was pale; his eyes

were fixed on her, but as if he did not hear or attend to what she was saying.

“ You are ill ! Surely you are ill, Guardy,” said Eleanor timidly. David Stuart started, and sighed :

“ I am only fatigued,” said he ; “ I have been travelling these two nights past.”

He turned from her, and entered the room where Lady Raymond and her son were sitting ; she greeted him in her usual kindly though languid manner ; Godfrey with tolerable cordiality ; and he passed on towards the library. Eleanor followed him for a few steps, but he did not seem aware of her presence, and left her with her eyes rivetted on the door which he closed after him.

She returned, with a bewildered air, to the sitting-room. Godfrey was discussing something eagerly, almost angrily.

“ Well, speak to her now,” were the

words Eleanor caught as she came forward.

“Eleanor dear, Godfrey thinks, and so do I, that you are rather childish for your age.”

“Does he, dear mamma?” said the gentle girl with a smile. “Tell me in what, and you shall see how womanly I shall grow;” and she seated herself by Lady Raymond, and kissed the hand that rested on the arm of her chair.

“My mother and I consider,” said Godfrey sternly, “that your manner is too childish with Mr. Stuart; flying down the steps in that heedless way to meet him; and kissing him. You are past fifteen, far too old for those romping and forward methods of displaying fondness: it really is most improper.” (Here Lady Raymond looked uneasily from her son to her daughter.) “She ought to be told of it, mother,” said Godfrey doggedly.

“ You ought also to leave off that ridiculous habit of calling him ‘ Guardy,’ like a miss in an old comedy ; and recollect that there is a difference of situation—of position—between Mr. Stuart and your father’s daughter.”

“ You know, dear,” gently interposed her mother, “ your birth and fortune will enable you to mingle in the best society. You will soon be old enough to be presented ; and we wish you would reflect—that is, that you could understand—I am sure I would not say,” (Lady Raymond was getting very nervous,) “ a word against Mr. Stuart ; we all owe him much ; I should be sorry you could feel otherwise than gratefully and kindly to him—”

“ Of course, my dear mother, she knows that ; but she ought to remember that Mr. Stuart was only Sir John Raymond’s secretary and man of business,” said Godfrey, with an imperious air.

Eleanor did not reply: from under the long dark lashes which quivered over her flushing cheek, she glanced towards the Indian cabinet where lay her father's last letter—that solemn and touching appeal which had been their only introduction to her guardian. Her guardian! of whom Godfrey spoke as if he were a hired clerk; and who, after all, was the son of Mr. Stuart of Dunleath. His ruin could not blot out hereditary descent. It was as good blood as any in Scotland. And his poverty! was Godfrey himself so wealthy, or so nobly born? He, who also inherited an independence from the generosity of her father! The first proud glance shot from Eleanor's eyes at her half-brother; then she repeated mentally those last affecting words, so often perused, so often blotted with her own and her poor mother's weeping:

“ Teach my child to respect and look

up to him ! and never forget that to his ear was whispered the blessing I pined to bestow on my distant wife and little one ; that his hand was the last that pressed the hand of the exile, whom it was God's will should die in sight of shore."

Tears stole into Eleanor Raymond's eyes.

" Don't be vexed, darling," said her mother.

" Don't be peevish, would be a better phrase I think," said Godfrey scornfully. " If Eleanor can't bear a word of reproof from those who have the best right to offer it—"

" I will remember all you wish, mamma : do not think I am peevish," said Eleanor. She bent and kissed her mother's cheek, and glided from the room.

Lady Raymond, after giving a glance of maternal satisfaction to her graceful figure,

leaned back with half-closed eyes, quite fatigued with the unusual effort she had made.

“ You see how gentle she is, poor child,” said she to Godfrey after a pause. “ She will certainly attend to what we have said. She is so docile and sweet tempered, and so ready to take any little hint.”

“ Well, I hope she may,” was Godfrey’s reply; “ her manners are as bad as possible. She is always on this low-cushioned stool, or sitting on the grass, or kneeling, while you are talking to her. All that is very bad, very undignified and unladylike. Yesterday she dropped her fork and leaned her cheek on her hand in the middle of dinner, with some wild exclamation about the sunset. I think she is growing very affected.”

“ I shall make *her* do the honours for the future, my dear Godfrey; and I will gradually begin to see a few of the country

neighbours, if I can possibly rouse myself to call. That will improve Eleanor: it will form her; and all you object to, will alter of itself. I am so glad you are here to say what should be done."

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT WOULD DUNLEATH COST?

THE embarrassment which Godfrey's observations had created in Eleanor's mind, appeared to have communicated itself to her guardian. She was shy, and he seemed both shy and sad. The pains she had taken to improve the time of his absence by attention to her studies, seemed quite thrown away ; he listened in a dejected, indifferent manner to her Italian reading ; he made no comment, he offered no corrections. If she came into the library, instead of finding him

tranquilly engaged with some favourite author, perhaps smiling to himself over its pages ; he met her with a start, walking restlessly up and down the room with folded arms, or she saw him leaning in the embrasure of the windows, looking out on the lawn, wistful and unoccupied. Was it possible that he was offended with her ?— angry at the change which she was conscious had stolen into her manner towards him ? He could not know Godfrey's criticism. Could he think her so ungrateful as to be altered by his brief absence from home ; or was he grieving for some cause unknown to Eleanor ? Her thoughts reverted to Mr. Peter Christison's death, and Dunleath.

“ Did you see any old friends at Edinburgh ? ” she asked.

“ No, Eleanor, I have no old friends. You know, my life since boyhood has been spent abroad. Few of my father's friends would recollect me, and people are not over eager

in claiming acquaintance with the sons of ruined men. I saw one old friend in London, and I talked to her of you."

To *her*: a lady friend!

Eleanor was considering how to shape some question which might give her a notion what sort of friend; young or old, pretty or plain; when a deep sigh from her guardian startled her, and looking up in his face, the expression of pain and dejection written there forbade further comment. They took a cheerless silent walk to the old haunts, through the park gates, and the forest glade, down to the roaring Linn. The day was oppressively hot, and the cool mossy shade round the Linn, with all its fern-covered rocks, and tangled foliage, seemed to Eleanor delicious.

"How pleasant and peaceful everything is here," said she, looking upwards with serene eyes to the blue sky, seen through the lattice work of light branches over her head.

But David Stuart only muttered in reply the text, “ And they cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

There was a long pause. Eleanor was watching the dragon flies dart across the gleams of sunshine in the black pool below ; her guardian also looked down into the pool, with dreaming eyes that saw nothing.

“ When I have my own fortune,” said she, “ will it be an income paid to me every year, or shall I be able to employ large sums in any way I please ?”

The start, the look of wild astonishment, on the part of her guardian, did not discourage Eleanor, whose head was full of her project of buying Dunleath. She smiled as with a sort of playful obstinacy she repeated, “ I say, may I do as I please with it ?”

The amazement faded out of David Stuart’s countenance : he forced a smile, and said :

“ What do you want to do with it ?

build an Italian palace, or a Gothic church, on plans of your own drawing?"

A small thing will change conversation ; this allusion to Eleanor's love of architectural drawing, and decorative art, a taste which her guardian fully shared, turned the current of moody thought into a new channel ; she answered gaily :

" I believe I could persuade you to let me do that, without waiting till I am of age. We would spend it all in marble columns, and superb sculpture, and we would build a wonder of the world."

" For the present you must content yourself with building castles in the air, my dear Eleanor," said he, with a smile ; and then, rallying out of his dejection, he pursued the favourite theme, and once more talked to Eleanor, as she loved to hear him. He described the Town-Hall at Bruges, and told her the story of Jacques Cœur, the

Flemish jeweller, whose house it was, and whose history is a pendant to our Wolsey's, in its illustration of the text, "Put not your trust in princes"

He described the curious church of San Miniato, at Florence, which Michael Angelo defended as a soldier, and where a thin slab of marble, at the eastern end of the church, admits a clouded glory of light at sunrise, remaining a blank wall during the rest of the day. He spoke of Italian and German churches, Indian temples, Turkish mosques, and Druid circles; of England and her ancient cathedrals; of the vulgar desecration of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey (where certainly the last thing any one is allowed to do, is "to meditate among the tombs"). Of the prejudice against pictorial decoration, and the outcry raised on that subject, though there is scarcely a whitewashed village church that has not a representation of the sym-

bolical dove painted over its altar. Of the iconoclastic fancy, that it must be more acceptable to God to pray to him in a church, left blank as the manger where the Saviour was first cradled, than to worship in temples of architectural beauty: and to raise singing of such a sort in His service, that only a strong sense of the reverence due to holy places can prevent us from shutting out the discord, by stopping our ears. Then they spoke of the old Covenanters; of the Waldenses; of noble struggles, and many martyrdoms; and then of Melrose Abbey and Walter Scott; but as they talked of Scotland, and the architectural relics there, David Stuart's sadness returned, and at length he relapsed into silence. Eleanor broke that silence by a desperate and straightforward question.

“What would Dunleath cost?” said she.

David Stuart turned and looked at her, repeating the words in a strange, irritable, gloomy tone.

“Mrs. Christison has changed her mind about Dunleath, I believe; it suits her daughter that they should remain there. It is not for sale.” Then he added vehemently and passionately: “I do not know how it is, Eleanor, that you seem bent on torturing me to-day!”

The gentle girl looked up in his face, with unconstrained amazement. Her guardian had never been unjust to her before. Her mother was always tender; no one had ever been harsh to her but Godfrey. She felt wounded.

“My thoughts were very far from giving you offence,” said she reproachfully.

David took her hand, and kissed it gently and sadly.

“I am ill, body and mind,” said he. “I suffer ; bear with me, even if I do not deserve it !”

Easy was it to Eleanor to bear with him. She would have endured any pain for his sake, if pain could be delegated ; but it was not easy to her to free her mind from a certain depression and conscious strangeness. She did not know which was most grievous to her, the voice in which he had accused her of “torturing” him, or the tone of miserable supplication in which he pleaded with her for patience. It was surely a reversal of their mutual position ! He was her guardian, her protector, her father’s friend, set in authority over her by that father. There was something shocking to Eleanor in his beseeching her to bear with him. But she answered him with the old innocent look of compassion he had so often seen in her eyes when a child, while listening to stories

of his mother, and his lost brothers and sister. In those days the compassion of the little child had fallen upon him like balm,—but to-day it seemed to fester in his heart!

CHAPTER X.

ELEANOR'S CHAPERON ARRIVES.

LADY RAYMOND did, as she had promised Godfrey, "rouse herself to call upon some of the country neighbours." Visits were paid, invitations were exchanged. People were very willing to come and see the pretty little heiress, and the widow who had lived as they said so long in grief and seclusion, watching over the education of her child. And then Godfrey discovered another fault in Eleanor, whom he pronounced to be extremely awkward. She was also painfully shy and silent with strangers,

which he affirmed to be perfectly ridiculous, as she could converse at home with extreme ease and fluency upon all subjects, and even showed a remarkable and superior intelligence.

It was the more irritating, as the little she did manage to say or do, was said and done with so constant a reference to her guardian, that Mr. Stuart on more than one occasion, without any assumption on his part, seemed to be doing the honors of Lady Raymond's house. The female part of the community also paid David a degree of attention extremely provoking to Godfrey. Those who had sons to marry, naturally thought it would be as well to be on good terms with the guardian whose consent would be required ; and those who had not, finding themselves guests in a household composed of a languid invalided woman, a shy girl, a brusque sailor and his wife, and a very agreeable and handsome young man, quietly threw over the

other elements of companionship presented to them, and addicted themselves to the last. While the company staid, they made much of David ; when the company were gone, Eleanor chatted merrily with him, as if to make amends for the constraint she had endured. Godfrey made a new move.

“ I presume,” said he, one morning at breakfast, “ that although Mr. Stuart has been Nell’s tutor, he does not intend to be her chaperon. Your health, my dear mother, puts it out of the question that you should fag yourself at balls and parties, and my Emma is not fit for that sort of thing. I have been thinking that Lady Margaret Fordyce, who is my wife’s aunt by marriage, might undertake it.”

“ Lady Margaret has already undertaken it, subject to Lady Raymond’s approval ;” said David, with a slight tinge of mockery in his smile. “ She is a very old friend of mine ;

I have known her since I was a boy. I saw her when I was in London, and we talked over this matter. For once, Mr. Marsden, you and I perfectly coincide in our views of what should be done. Lady Margaret is highly connected, valued and respected in society, and would probably find interest and amusement in the task."

Lady Margaret was accordingly invited to Aspendale. She wrote word that having been away many years in Italy, she had promised to make a whole tour of visits in Scotland that autumn and winter ; but she would come for a month in the spring.

The autumn and winter wore away ; no event of importance occurred. Lady Raymond caught an inflammatory cold driving home from a dinner given by one of the country neighbours, and David Stuart grew daily more moody, restless, and unhappy, as it seemed to Eleanor. They were, therefore, all

more or less *triste* when the momentous day arrived which brought the proposed chaperon.

When Lady Margaret Fordyce was announced, and entered the drawing-room, leading her little daughter by the hand, Eleanor could not restrain an exclamation of astonishment. If a rose had by some sudden transformation been turned into a lady, and its bud into her child, she could not have felt more amazed. “Good heavens, how beautiful!” she said, turning to her guardian; but he was looking with a glad smile at the new-comers.

Lady Margaret came forward rapidly and gracefully. She greeted the Marsdens, was introduced to Lady Raymond, and then, letting go her child’s hand and taking Eleanor’s, she said smiling:

“And this is my eldest daughter, that is to be.”

The lovely stranger was a woman of the

world ; she made no exclamation about Eleanor's beauty ; but it was clear that she also was surprised and struck. Eleanor's heart beat quick ; confused thoughts chased each other through her mind. It was strange in all their conversations, it had never occurred to David Stuart to tell her how very beautiful his old friend was ; and somehow she had clothed the idea of a chaperon, in a more elderly form.

Her chaperon, and Godfrey Marsden's aunt by marriage ! Was it possible she beheld the incarnation of these two thoughts ?

Lady Margaret was a very great beauty. There could be no dispute about that. Her enemies—no, she had no enemies, but such critics as were not friends—said her figure was too full, and her eyebrows and eyelashes not dark enough ; but a certain air of candour, intelligence, and power, gave great dignity to her face, and she carried herself with grace and majesty. Her complexion

was sunny and rich ; her hands and arms those of a statue ; and her faultless mouth so alive with expression, that you could have told her mood before speaking, as the deaf guess the words they do not hear. When she had interchanged greetings with all the assembled guests, she turned again to David Stuart.

“ Here is a packet from your lawyer,” said she. “ He brought it to me before I left town. I have held it in my hand the whole way ; for if there is anything inspires me with awe, it is a packet tied with pink tape from a lawyer’s office. Now I will go and take off my bonnet, and become one of the family.” She smiled at Eleanor as she said the last words, and they went together from the room.

Before they returned, David had read his lawyer’s packet, long as it was ; and Eleanor had ascertained, that Lady Margaret being

sister to the Duke of Lanark, and Lanark's Lodge the nearest place to Dunleath, she had known Miss Raymond's guardian in very early days ; and Mr. Fordyce having been much in Italy, she had also met Mr. Stuart in later days.

“They were very good friends,” Lady Margaret said ; and Eleanor sighed. Either Lady Margaret’s arrival, or the lawyer’s packet, must have gladdened David Stuart amazingly, for Eleanor had scarcely ever seen him in such spirits ; she never remembered such a merry dinner as they had that evening ; she never had seen any one so lovely or so entertaining as Lady Margaret. What a quantity of persons, things, and places, she and David seemed to have known and seen together, and how pleasantly she talked of all ! What stores of information, what ready, graceful wit, what kindness and earnestness, came out like sunny sparkles on the stream

of her discourse ! Eleanor felt dazzled and bewildered ; it was like a dream. But when, after dinner, David hoped she was not too tired with her journey to sing, and Lady Margaret sang ; then Eleanor's admiration reached its height.

The gush of that sweet, clear, powerful voice, thrilled to her heart. Songs were sung, "old as the hills," but new to Eleanor. Scotch ballads, with their sudden octaves of distance and touching words ; merry Neapolitan airs, mingled with recitative ; melancholy and passionate German melodies of the divine Schubert ; French romances ; nothing seemed to come amiss to Lady Margaret. She wound up with a little plaintive Hindoo air, reminding David of the day he taught it to her, and how they both laughed at their own vexation at the quantity of tedious visitors who poured in that particular morning, as if purposely to prevent the completion of the lesson. Then

she told David not to be lazy, but to come and sing, himself; and they sang together.

Was Eleanor jealous of the accomplishments of her new friend? Surely not. All the ladies in Christendom might have sung like skylarks, and she would only have been glad of it for their sakes; and yet she felt pained. Here was a stranger come amongst them, who knew her guardian so very intimately—who remembered Dunleath and his mother—who could sing with him. Eleanor could not sing. Her guardian had taught her music, and she had learnt it well and quickly; but he was not a god—he could not give her a voice. What a loss it seemed, as she sat now and listened. Those blended tones; those long, soft, thrilling notes, that rose like angel messengers, floating away to an unknown world; that companionship of life and breath, vague and delicious, why had heaven denied it to her?

It was not till even Lady Margaret's beau-

tiful voice gave evidence of fatigue, that David turned from the piano, and came back to his place. She followed him, and sat down by Eleanor.

“Now that I am fairly installed in office,” said she, gaily, “I shall begin, like all new officials, to make great reforms—wonderful reforms; and, first of all, in Eleanor’s dress.”

“Is she ill-dressed? It seems to me a very pretty gown,” said David, looking fondly at Eleanor.

“It is a colour for an old dowager, not a young girl; and only look at the sleeves!”

“Oh, I know nothing about sleeves,” said he, laughing.

“But I do, and it shocks me to see such a sleeve. Discords in dress strike my eye, as discords in music strike your ear. I can’t bear them: my spirits fail and I become quite irritable in the company of dowdies, while I am polite and charming in

a well-dressed circle. People talk of vanity and frivolity ; but, depend upon it, there is a harmony in dress, as there is in all other arts and sciences, and we ought to understand it. It does not take more time or more money to be prettily dressed, than to be dressed in unsuitable colours. Eleanor must not be a dowdy. I approve of a prospectus I read in some annual, for the establishment of a *Beauti-cultural Society*, where prizes are to be given to those who are the best-looking, and fines levied on those who choose to make unbecoming toilettes. It will be a most useful institution.”

“ Well, Eleanor shall be a member. I will cede my authority to you, so far.”

“ Then her dressing-room—I thought I was in some young bachelor’s chambers in the Temple. No muslin, no screens, no knick-knacks of any kind ; a regular library in miniature ; book-cases down each side of

the fire-place, with all sorts of learned books in them; a reading-table, a writing-table, and a painting-table: as to the dressing-table, I really expected to find upon it razors, and diamond-dust for sharpening them. I was comforted only by the extreme and feminine feebleness of the sketches of lovely Dunleath, which I suppose you have set her as copies. You must have a good master, dear Eleanor," said she, turning kindly to her: "you have great talent for drawing, though I discourage this guardian of yours, and want to set all the wheels going on a new principle. By-the-bye, Mr. Stuart, I have brought down some H. B.'s! they are very good."

She rose and fetched the caricatures, and laid them one by one before him; standing by, and looking at them over his shoulder. Eleanor knew nothing of politics or political men. She had heard fragments of what

appeared to her intolerably dull conversation between the neighbouring country-gentlemen, about Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel, and people who were “in,” or “out,” like boys at cricket, but she gave no heed to it. Now she was sorry she could not understand the jests which seemed to amuse her guardian. She sate, looking gravely, almost sadly, at these two friends, who were not thinking of her or of anything she could share in. A little circumstance startled her out of her reverie. Lady Margaret suddenly laughed, as she bent to look at one of the H. B. sketches. Mr. David Stuart, among other personal advantages, had beautiful hair; and his hair curled, almost in ringlets, at each temple. When Lady Margaret laughed, her head was bent so low that her breath stirred the ringlet like a waft of the summer breeze. A hot, angry thrill went through Eleanor’s heart. For days afterwards, with

a vividness that astonished her, she was haunted by the image of those two heads bowed together over the caricatures, and the waving of that curl in the breath of Lady Margaret's joyous laugh. While the H. B.'s were being restored to their portfolio, David Stuart turned to Eleanor.

"You look pale and bored, my little girl," said he, "come and play a game of chess."

His manner was so gay, she could not resist remarking it to him.

"You are quite light-hearted again," said she.

"Yes, I have had such good news; when you know Lady Margaret better—" (and he looked back at her with a kind smile) "you will know that she carries sunshine with her wherever she comes."

The game of chess was played, but Eleanor was sadly inattentive. She glanced

at Lady Margaret, who was teaching little Euphemia the crotchet-stitch ; and then, with her eyes fixed on the chess-board, she allowed her thoughts to roam vaguely through real and imaginary scenes, all more or less connected with the fact of the great intimacy that subsisted between her guardian and her chaperon that was to be. Oh ! how well she seemed to know his tastes, his habits of thought. How far, far beyond poor Eleanor's, was her power of entertaining him. How wonderfully beautiful she was ! How glad he seemed since her arrival ; he that had been so sad and absent in spirit for months. How kind, cordial, almost caressing was her manner to him ! These, and such-like thoughts, turned round like a water-wheel in Eleanor's mind. Presently, little Euphemia came up to the chess-table.

“ Good night, I am going to bed,” said she. “ Good night, Mr. Stuart,” and she

put her little face up to be kissed. “Good night, Miss Raymond.”

Eleanor hesitated. Unaccountably the scene returned to her, when Godfrey had commented on her freedom of manner with her guardian; when he had advised her to be more dignified; when he had said that embracing Mr. Stuart was a forward method of displaying her affection. Some nervous oppression hung on her spirits. She gazed at Euphemia, and sighed. The shadow of David’s kiss seemed to hover round the child’s mouth, as the shadows of clouds fleet over the corn on a sunny day. The colour rose in her cheek.

“If you won’t kiss me, I shall make you a curtsey,” said the little girl, and ran merrily away.

“You were not much older than that, dear Eleanor, when first I came to Aspendale,” said David Stuart; and in his tone and in his eyes, there was such a deep and cherishing tenderness, such gathering up of

memories for long years, such blending of her helpless childhood, with present days, that Eleanor suddenly felt happier than she had believed it possible, during the last two hours, ever to feel again.

CHAPTER XI.

UNCERTAINTY AND CERTAINTY.

DAY by day the same nothings that seemed so much, the grains of sand along the pathway of life, disturbed Eleanor Raymond's mind. Lady Margaret was kindness itself, not only to Eleanor, but to all around her. She contrived to converse even with Godfrey's common-place Emma. She nursed Emma's new baby ; an obstinate-looking and not well-tempered baby, exceedingly like its father ; and soothed it in its most irate moments with a spell such as the famous whisperer

exercised on vicious horses. She amused Lady Raymond, and accompanied her in the little dowager drives, which had hitherto been solitary. She was almost an idol at the Parsonage-house with old Mr. Fordyce. I think she would have succeeded even in mollifying Godfrey, if she had not so pertinaciously defended David Stuart from all his criticisms, and shown so open a regard for him. She was not without sympathy in what Godfrey called his “Scotch pride.” Now, if there was one thing that irritated Lieutenant Marsden more than another, it was any lament over Dunleath.

“ So ridiculous,” he said, “ because a fellow once had a place in his family ; some paltry Highland place, too, which nobody ever heard of except himself ! Hanging on by departed consequence (such as it was), just to be able to give himself most intolerable airs about nothing at all.”

“ I don’t think the paltriness of the place

would make his regret more ridiculous," said Lady Margaret. "It was the inherited home of his family for centuries. I don't see why he should not be as fond of Dunleath, as my brother of Lanark's Lodge, and with as good reason."

"I'll tell you what," said Godfrey, bluntly, "if Mr. Stuart was ill-looking and vulgar—not that I admire him; meagre, self-conceited fellow, with a step that's half a saunter and half a stride—you ladies would give him up."

Lady Margaret coloured violently. "I do not think Mr. Stuart has any vanity," said she, "though he might stand excused if he had. I remember his mother; she was the most beautiful human being I ever saw, and he is very like her. But it is quite possible, as you say, that with such weak creatures as we women are, Mr. Stuart's good looks may not be without their influence. On the other hand, I do not see why any great grief or

anxiety should not command one's sympathy, however misplaced we may think it. Objects we deem important are often trivial in the eyes of others ; even the placing of our affections frequently seems absurd, especially with those who have no natural indulgence."

"Have I no natural indulgence, Lady Margaret?"

"Very little, either natural or acquired, I should think, Mr. Marsden," said she, with an arch smile. "You may be a good man ; I believe you are a good man ; I respect you. But you are not tender ; you are not pitiful ; you always take a harsh, scornful, suspicious view of things."

"I have quite as much indulgence, I think, as is consistent with strict justice."

"But strict justice is not what we are to deal out to one another in this world. God tries us all with such very different temptations. Only look round you, and consider what happens every day. One man is so

surfeited with plenty, that his physician is extorting from him a promise to be more temperate, not to eat and drink to the injury of his own body ; and another is in prison for stealing, may be, a loaf of bread, or a pound of bacon. One is crushed into sin by misery, and another pampered into it by luxury. How can we talk of dealing strict justice ? Charity is what is expected of us. The charity which hopeth all things, and comprehendeth all things, even the temptations that would be no temptation to ourselves. But I do not think you do allot strict justice to David Stuart.”

“ No ?”

“ No. What do you think of a man at his age, and with his talents and attractions, burying himself in the country for five or six years to educate a little girl ? Is there nothing admirable in that ? Nothing in his daily care and self-denial ? Ay, even in his patience with yourself.”

This new view of David's position and qualities exasperated Godfrey.

"Well, that is a little too much," said he. "No one asked the fellow to live here, except my poor mother, at a time when she was quite unfit to attend to business. It was done out of vanity, and to assume an authority he has no right to."

"He has entire authority over Eleanor."

"His residence here was to please himself; he had little choice I should think."

"You are mistaken; the Governor-General of India proposed to him to be his secretary, and my brother Lanark, though he never saw him, merely on the excellent report given of him, offered him five hundred a-year, and a home at Lanark's Lodge, to undertake the management of affairs for him."

"Well?"

"Well, he refused. He said he was too fond of Eleanor to leave her till she was

grown up, and had no further need of him."

"Eleanor is much indebted to him," said Godfrey with a sneer.

"I am indebted to him; I am most deeply grateful to him. I think you are very unjust!" exclaimed she, with some agitation of manner.

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Stuart, to me, to every one. I remember your speaking quite bitterly of one of your midshipmen on board your last ship, because he said having to keep watch at night, gave him inflammation in his eyes."

"Because I knew the boy was talking nonsense; shamming. I knew by my own feelings."

"But you can't know by your own feelings," said Lady Margaret. "Who made your mode of thinking and feeling the standard and example by which your fellow-

creatures are to be tried ? God made one man strong, and another weak ; one dark, another fair ; one merry, and another sad. One cannot weep for sternness, and another's tears 'lie high,' as the phrase is. We are all as different as possible ; we are all faulty, and we owe each other a continually running debt of indulgence ; instead of which, we all walk through the world as if we were quite perfect, and provoked at not meeting with equal perfection."

"I am sure I don't expect to meet with perfection," said Godfrey.

"You always speak as if you did," interposed Eleanor. "I never yet heard of any one praised before you, even for efforts and good actions which you must have approved, that you did not say he was a poor, weak creature—or a vain, rash creature—or that he did it from ambition, or self-interest, or"—

"You are becoming extremely flippant,

Eleanor. If I said so, it is probable the person on whom I made the remark deserved it."

"Very possibly," said Lady Margaret; "but I say that only proves human infirmity in general. Show me the man who is *not* vain, or weak, or rash, or ambitious, who does *not* in some way mix his human frailty with his work, doing the same amount of good. Till then, I thank the man who helps me to bear my burden, though he touch it with labour-stained hands, or carry it with a slow and feeble gait."

"If you don't care whether the persons you associate with, are worthy or unworthy, there is a difference in our notions on these subjects," said Godfrey, doggedly.

"That is a very childish way of closing the argument. I mean what I say; that I no more expect to meet perfection in others than to attain it myself. I believe not only every one has faults, but every one has some

great leading and especial fault; and as long as that fault is neither a very mean, nor a very atrocious one—as long as I believe they do their best to balance their imperfect nature by such good as lies in their power, I am as ready to respect and love them as if my reason were a mole, and had no eyes to spy out their imperfections.”

“Well, I am not.”

“So it seems; but does it never strike you, that while you have no patience with one man because he is stingy, another because he is extravagant, a third because he is presumptuous, that there may be something in your own nature that makes them equally impatient? To exchange indulgence with them, fault for fault, would be best, don’t you think?”

“I think, that in condemning where I see reason to condemn, I merely follow the principles of religion, and the dictates of common sense.”

“ Not of our religion, Mr. Marsden : you are a great reader of the Scriptures, but they cannot bear that interpretation. In all the history of our Saviour, there is not one wrathful sentence—not one speech of condemnation. He had sympathy and compassion for all human infirmities ; for sorrow, for sickness, even for repentant sin. He went about healing and pardoning. Whether it was Jairus wailing over his little daughter, or Lazarus’ sisters weeping by a brother’s tomb, or the lame beggar who vainly struggled to the blessed pool for cure ; the gentle Jesus felt for all. The last bitter moments he spent on earth, hanging in torture on the Cross, were spent in speaking comfort to the penitent thief. There is nothing recorded after that, but his exclamation in the death-pang. Oh ! if ever a lesson of indulgence could be taught to man, surely we might learn it there ! Even to

those who deny and doubt the divinity of Christ, his life must seem one great and complete emblem of universal toleration!"

She spoke eagerly—earnestly; the tears were in Eleanor's eyes. Godfrey turned away:

"I did not expect," said he, "that we should fall into a theological discussion *à-propos* of Mr. Stuart's merits; we have had enough of it, and of him."

Eleanor agreed in every word Lady Margaret had spoken: she loved her for what she said, and the way she said it: but her memory lingered capriciously over the sudden and violent blush with which her beautiful chaperon had received Godfrey's imputation of being influenced by Mr. Stuart's appearance, to more indulgence than an ugly and ungainly man would have inspired. Why did Lady Margaret blush about her guardian's good looks?

With restless curiosity Eleanor sought to glean the history of the past. Patiently as a bird builds its nest, she gathered materials—here a feather and there a straw—to build a fabric for fancy to lodge in. But with all her pains, she learnt little more than the simple facts told the first day she saw Lady Margaret: that chance had made the lovely lady and her guardian, neighbours at home and abroad, and that they were “great friends.” Lady Margaret had been married to an elder brother of Mr. Fordyce, very much older than herself; and was a widow, not rich, with one little girl. They lived principally with the old Duchess of Lanark, Margaret’s grandmother, at Naples, and they intended to return there at some indefinite time within the next two years, whenever the Duchess recalled them.

Her gleanings and her conjectures were unprofitable and absorbing to Eleanor’s mind.

She no longer took any pleasure in her usual occupations. She lost her gaiety, and became grave as she was when a little child. If she attempted to draw, visions of Dunleath rose up; scenes of early days; Mrs. Stuart and the Greek sundial; Lady Margaret and David as children wandering by the lake, or singing together on the hill-side among the heather, as she had heard her chaperon say they did. If she opened the piano, the keys remained untouched; while leaning her head on her hand in melancholy abstraction, she looked at the ivory notes as though they had done her some injury. The melodies Lady Margaret sang, floated through the dim silence. The thrill of those blended voices returned: every note, every cadence rose and fell as she had heard them the first evening, and often—too often since! If she endeavoured to read—for it had become an endeavour—she was haunted by frag-

ments of conversation, proving how far beyond her, in information and eloquence was the new companion at Aspendale, the “old friend” of Dunleath and Naples.

Of all the pleasant occupations that had divided Eleanor’s life into happy hours, riding was the only one that remained unchanged. Lady Margaret was a coward on horseback : she could not ride. When she stood under the portico, smiling in the sun, shading her eyes with her white hands to see them mount, Eleanor knew that for the next two hours at least the pleasant life was sure again. She felt her momentary superiority ; she felt that she could have rode over precipices, and swum her horse through rivers and lakes, dark with the foam of a thousand thunderstorms, sooner than have forgone her rides with her guardian. She was conscious of a sort of gladness that Lady Margaret could not accompany them. They were the only

hours now that she spent alone with the companion of her childhood.

It was in returning from one of these expeditions, that David Stuart gathered some of the heather in bloom, which grew in the wild broken ground beyond the roaring Linn. Eleanor carried some up to her room, to put in her hair when she dressed for dinner. As she laid it down, she saw, from her window, Lady Margaret coming from the garden with a quantity of fresh roses in her basket. “Oh ! heather—lovely heather ! how it reminds one of the hills !” Eleanor heard her exclaim ; and as she took them from Mr. Stuart’s hand, she kissed the purple blossoms with childish delight, and put some in Euphemia’s straw hat.

David Stuart smiled, and said something Eleanor could not hear ; apparently he asked for a rose, for Lady Margaret carefully selected one and presented it to him ; then

he said something more, at which she laughed merrily, but also blushed ; that deep sudden blush which was so lovely, which was so strange, which agitated and puzzled Eleanor so. What had her guardian said ? It must have been some comparison between her and the rose, and truly she was like one ; or some allusion to the exchange they had made, for as he took the rose he pointed to the heather. What did it signify ? What a wretched trifle to dwell upon ! Why were such nothings become the only important moments in Eleanor's days ? She looked down with a heavy sigh at Lady Margaret. They were still talking. She was feeding Mr. Stuart's horse with the roses, the beautiful roses she had just gathered ; evidently she was not thinking of the flowers, she was thinking of what he said. What did he say ? Presently the horse made a snatch at the remaining roses, and the basket fell from

Lady Margaret's hand ; she laughed, and Mr. Stuart called the groom to lead the horses away. Then Lady Margaret took his arm and they walked back to the garden, little Euphemia tripping after them.

Eleanor stood still at her window ; she heard the swinging of the shrubbery gate as they passed through, and the sweet joyous laugh of Lady Margaret, and the sound of receding steps on the gravel-path, and then she heard only the confused songs of many birds, the bleat of lambs in the distance, the hum of insects on the wing, all that aggregate of innumerable lives that men call silence. She leaned her head against the window-frame, and looked out on the sky and trees and the road before the house, lost in thought.

Reader, I once saw a flower blow. It was a superb specimen of that glorious bulb, the amaryllis. For its own sake it stood in the window, to glean the two hours of sunshine

of a London sky ; for the sake of the giver it stood near me, that from time to time when I looked up from my reading, I might as the French say, “ caress it with my eye.” Suddenly a sharp sound as of the striking of a large insect’s wing against the glass, made me glance upwards. I saw it,—I saw that daily and hourly miracle of nature, in its act of completion : my flower blew ; not as the rose blows, day by day unfolding its soft leaves a little and a little more in gradual beauty ; but suddenly, with a glad start, flinging its deep rose-coloured leaves asunder, the heart of my young amaryllis lay bare to the light, and the sun saw a new worshipper on the strong green stem which daily drew light from his glory. It was the act of a moment ; but no human hand, no skill, no art, could have forced the shining petals back to their calyx. My flower had blown ; to live its life of dumb loveliness to look as it did then,

fresh as the dews of the morning ; and afterwards waning in its beauty, to grow dimmer and more earthly, till a new and different compression should shrink those long pointed leaves, and bid them hang brown and withered, from the cup which was their cradle and their grave !

As my flower blew that morning to the natural sun, so woke the heart of Eleanor Raymond to the sun of love. Innocent and guileless as she was, brought up in seclusion, knowing nothing of the world or its ways, she was yet too passionate by nature to doubt the meaning of all she felt and thought. She suddenly comprehended that in her chaperon she feared a possible rival ; that she loved David Stuart ; that his marriage with Lady Margaret, or any other except herself, was a thought dark with jealous misery.

No new ray had fallen on her life, no

phase of change had altered it, but the hour had come. Alone, musing with her sweet face turned like that flower to the light, the red flush of sudden consciousness swept over her cheek, and she almost whispered to herself the thought, "It is because I love him."

She loved! She too might bloom, and wane, and wither, but her heart could not be forced back to unconsciousness, any more than the leaves of my amaryllis, to the cold green calyx that had enclosed them.

She loved him. Well, why not? She could marry him. It was a triumphant thought that she had wealth and comfort to give in addition to herself; that she did not come to him through poverty, and doubt, and difficulty, as Emma had come to Godfrey, but with all the advantages that could make earthly happiness easy. He need not, like Godfrey, have a dangerous uncertain

profession to take him away from home, and leave his wife to listen to the stormy winds, praying for those at sea. Perpetual companionship, unbroken, undisturbed, would be theirs. They would go about doing good together, welcomed by their equals, beloved by the poor. It was a visionary life of calm and entire happiness. She would marry him ; that is, if he loved her. If ! What was she, that she should be preferred to Margaret ? Margaret, with her wondrous beauty, playful wit, earnest goodness and eloquence ? And yet she thought he loved her. Now she could explain to herself, those strange nervous contradictions of manner that had so tormented her : his sadness and abstraction at times. Yes, certainly, he loved her.

If he loved Margaret, why remain at Aspendale ? why refuse the Duke of Lanark's offer through her of a home at Lanark's

Lodge, and a settled destiny among Lady Margaret's own people? Surely, he loved *her*, loved Eleanor, his ward, his companion, his wife that would be. Perhaps he himself had viewed his position as Godfrey had viewed it, when he desired her to be more dignified in manner towards one who had been only her father's man of business—as if the mere want of riches on his part was to divide them! And a superb scorn for riches curled the lip of the young heiress. He wished her to see the world, and make a choice; but he would find her choice was made, and the world could not alter it. Who could she see in that unknown world to be compared to him? Even Lady Margaret had spoken of his superiority to others in talents and attraction. Her mother had talked, half playfully, half in earnest, of the great match her little heiress was to make; but a great match is a very vague temptation

at Eleanor's age. What did she want with rank and grandeur? Her ideal happiness was to be Mrs. David Stuart, and Mrs. David Stuart she would be!

CHAPTER XII.

A HOLIDAY IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

GREAT restlessness and disturbance of mind, even without any very heavy or painful anxiety, are bad for the health ; and Eleanor, who could scarcely eat her dinner, for watching and calculating the great mystery of whether it were possible that Lady Margaret was more agreeable than herself to her guardian, became as thin and pale as a sage who, with alembic and crucible, had wasted his nights and days searching for the philosopher's stone. The Doctor was called in.

When doctors are a little puzzled, they always say the patient requires “change of air;” and accordingly it was decided that Eleanor should have change of air. Godfrey proposed they should make a trip to Portsmouth. He had business at Portsmouth. The port Admiral was an old friend of Sir John Raymond’s. Lady Raymond would come too, and then they could all go to the Isle of Wight. All but Lady Margaret—she disliked sailing, even more than riding; she was always sea-sick; she would pay a visit to some Fordyce relations while they were gone; and when they returned, if Eleanor was well, they would go to London for the season.

Eleanor felt a pang of self-reproach at the secret gladness with which she heard these arrangements, which excluded her chaperon. That lovely and most loveable creature, who had become so fond of her, was it possible that she actually rejoiced at leaving

her behind, when they set out on their holiday expedition ? I am afraid it was both possible and true.

A real holiday, however, it was to Eleanor. The sea-breeze, the quantity of new objects, the long happy days, during which her guardian had nothing to do but to attend to her, brought back the colour to her cheek, and the light to her eye. Her mother, too, was more than usually tender to her. Anxiety for her health was mingled with memories of her father ; for Lady Raymond had never been at Portsmouth, that city of farewells, since she sailed for India with Sir John ; and when she had said her gentle good night to Eleanor the first evening they were away from Aspendale, she still detained her wistfully gazing in her face, till at last she laid her head, with a few feeble tears, on her daughter's bosom, and faltered out the words :

“ You are all that remains to me of *him*, my dear child.”

Eleanor felt grateful and happy. She was not superseded, as usual, by the overpowering love her mother bore to Godfrey. But Godfrey also was satisfied ; he was in his element at Portsmouth, and his spirits were elated by the comparative insignificance to which Mr. David Stuart was reduced.

Godfrey was only a lieutenant in the navy. He was nobody in himself, but he knew a great many people. He was respected in his profession. There was great interest shown to the party he brought with him : the pretty, quiet wife ; the pale and lovely heiress, his half-sister ; and his mother, the widow of a man who had held an important command in India. Admirals and captains, who would under ordinary circumstances merely have returned the young lieutenant’s stiff well-disciplined salute, relaxed

into a thousand agreeable attentions to Lady Raymond and her daughter. They were shown over ships, and accompanied through dock-yards, and taken to see the forging of anchors and the making of blocks. Many of the senior officers remembered Sir John, and were struck with the good sense and intelligence shown by “poor Raymond’s daughter.” They complimented Godfrey on his half-sister. As to Mr. David Stuart, no one thought about him; he dropped naturally into the rear; and when one of the officers asked another who that very good-looking fellow was, who belonged to Lady Raymond’s party, his position was vaguely and carelessly marked out as having been “Sir John Raymond’s secretary, or something.”

All this was as it should be, and Godfrey was exceedingly well pleased. His manner to David Stuart involuntarily resumed some-

thing of the old imperiousness with which he used to inquire into the state of affairs, "in order to advise his mother on her plans;" and he secretly hoped that Eleanor would be sufficiently struck by the evidence of her guardian's real position in the world, to relax in the sentimental reverence she showed for his opinions and sayings. But Eleanor was lost in dreams; she did not notice all this. She was musing on ships and shipwrecks; Otaheite and Captain Cook; the life of Columbus, and the death of Nelson; the courage of the man who first ventured to sea; the wonderful discovery of the compass; all sorts of wandering, crowding thoughts chased each other through her mind.

She and Emma stood close together, looking at the immense hot anchor they had just seen welded, from which the slant sparks were still flying, under the blows of the

workmen. That giant anchor, what ship would it belong to? what would be her destiny? Smooth harbours in lovely southern isles rose to Eleanor's fancy; the palm and cocoa-nut growing up in the tropic sky; gorgeous birds of brilliant plumage flitting about; savages, graceful, idle, kindly and innocent, like the Incas of yore; and the ship coming in slowly, full sail, looking (as ships do look) more full of conscious life and volition, than any other thing put together by the industry and science of man. Then the scene changed. Eleanor saw the ship drifting over the boundless ocean in a midnight storm; her masts cut away, her rigging shattered, crowds of wave-washed men struggling to save her, to save themselves; the roar of the winds and the mountainous billows sounded in her ear, overwhelming the voice of the captain shouting to his crew. Thought is lightning quick. Eleanor had got to the

island Shakspeare peopled; to Ariel, Caliban, and that wreck,

“Which had no doubt some noble creatures in her,”

when Emma spoke:

“What a great strong thing it is,” said Emma. “I had no idea an anchor was so big! I hope Godfrey will be sure to have a strong one when he has a ship. He must be a commander first. I hope he will soon be a commander.”

Eleanor’s visions vanished. She looked round and smiled at her guardian. He came forward a little:

“Don’t remain longer in this heat,” said he, anxiously. “You look as pale as Miranda when she was expostulating with Prospero.”

Eleanor moved away, leaning on the Admiral’s arm, and smiled again brightly and fondly at David Stuart. He, too, she found,

was thinking of Shakspeare's island. It was pleasant to her to know that his thoughts were the same as her own. They would talk it all over in the evening, all she had seen in that crowd and company of strangers.

Godfrey would have been in despair, could he have guessed how very different the impression made on his half-sister's mind was to the one he desired. I am sure he never could have walked on with that cheerful determined air by Lady Raymond's side, had he known that Eleanor was yearning for the hour when this parade would be over, and home-chat with her guardian begin ; or even that the enthusiastic young officer, with whom David brought up the rear, was listening to him as to a sort of demi-god, because he had been on board an East Indiaman when she was burnt ; interrupting his description of that event by a running commentary of ejaculations : "Oh, Sir ! what a scene, Sir ! You are a fortunate man, Sir, to

have been in her! I wish I had been there, Sir!" and other brief sentences, expressive of the satisfaction it would have afforded him to have had to struggle for life among charred timbers and floating wreck, after taking his choice of the chances of being burned or drowned. And David and he shook each other by the hand, at the gate of the Dock-yard, with immense cordiality, much to Godfrey's discomfiture, who wished Mr. Stuart to feel a little humbled and mortified, and was disturbed by his apparent unconsciousness.

Apparent; not real! This peep into the future, this vision of Eleanor removed from him by the common course of worldly events, was not otherwise than comfortless to David's heart; but his heart was full of other and heavier anxieties. As it was, however, it trebled the value of her smile; that silent method of communion which no crowd can

prevent persons who know each other well from interchanging. Eleanor's smile, too, was peculiarly beautiful. Her expression, habitually grave and shy, changed to a sort of loving tenderness rather than gaiety when she smiled, fading slowly back to its original gravity—as unlike Lady Margaret's glowing brilliancy as possible, but beautiful in its way. David pondered over her smile; and again, and again, as it often did, the recollection of her countenance as a child, came back to him—as a child, listening to him and pitying him in the early happy days. That God to whom all hearts are open, alone could tell why the recollection was fraught with pain to David Stuart; why there came over his own face the cloud of a momentary wild anxiety, and from his unclosed lips the moan of an unspoken prayer.

They crossed to the Isle of Wight. In vain had that little cockney paradise been

trodden by millions of pleasure seekers ; in vain had the coloured sands of Alum Bay found their way to innumerable toy-shops throughout the kingdom. To Eleanor all was new, fresh, and delightful. The honey-smelling creepers that grew on the grey stones and low walls at Niton ; the deep green waves that crept in and out of the cavern at Freshwater, the gleaming white rocks of the Needles, the sunny days, the moonlights on the ocean, transported her with joy. Never was holiday planned that was so completely successful. When she received a letter from Lady Margaret, she almost hesitated to open it, lest some expression of regret or anxiety should break the spell of undisturbed delight in all around her ; but Lady Margaret wrote very merrily.

“ I am here,” she said, “ among my country relations ; very learned and well informed people ; even the children are so over instructed, that I prepare for a visit to the nursery as for a

college little-go examination. My friends are agricultural, but by no means simple folks. The process of tilling the earth, which used to be easy, is now performed by the most complex experiments. ‘As ignorant as a plough-boy,’ is a phrase fallen into disuse. Instead of ‘whistling o’er the lea,’ he goes calculating o’er the lea, what species of manure will produce ‘an interstitial crop.’ Mr. H. grows turnips like phœnixes out of their own ashes, and has just discovered that chalk will make as good a fire as coal.

“Conceive our old familiar friend the coal-scuttle, wearing a new face, and dismally presenting itself to notice, with half a bushel of white, ghastly, cheerless lumps, for all the world like the ghosts of the coals we burned in our childhood! “Old King *Coal* was a jolly old soul,” his successor is a horror. All the pretty little endearing ways, all the playful fancies of our fire are extinguished for ever. None of the flickering and flaming

bursts of gas and tar, mute brilliancies that were to us, as we sate alone, what jests and repartees are in conversation ; but a dull smouldering, prosaic, detestable way of warming oneself. Even Mrs. Ellis will never teach the women of England to make their firesides pleasant under such circumstances.

“ The fire is put out, and so are we ; we cannot accustom our minds to the new embarrassment. What are we to do with our old tropes, similes, and metaphors ? What will be the use of talking of the flame of love, to a generation who burn red hot chalk ? What is to become of that pleasant, confidential time, the hour before a winter dinner, when the November fire asserted its claim to be “ light enough to talk by ? ” Shall we ever be able to tell each other anything worth hearing by chalk and candlelight ? Our fire was a friendly companion—a kindler of cheerfulness—a household god. We talked

of old memories and hopes to its cinders. Can we sit by the chalk, like billiard-markers? I rebel; I, for one, set my face against the pale intruder, and desperately insist on coals. Indeed, altogether, I am getting so tired of a pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, that I long to have a pursuit of ignorance. Oh! for an unenlightened friend! Oh! for a dear dolt, who doesn't comprehend or try experiments! I think of advertising in the 'Times': 'Wanted, as companion to a lady, a Stupid Person; preference will be given to one who cannot write or read.'

"Meanwhile, I am glad to be able to write and read, that I may be able to write to you, and hear from you. Tell me all you do and see. Tell me of the regatta—if it is time for that beautiful sight; where the small vessels chase each other like a flight of sea-gulls over the water. Tell me of the charm-

ing nondescript young noblemen and gentlemen you will meet at Cowes. How well I remember their dress ! The roughest of sailors' dreadnoughts, with polished French boots, satin stocks, and turquoise shirt-pins. Some habited like sailors before the mast (always excepting the boots and studs), some inclining to be corsairs and Greek gallionees, with white trousers and scarlet sashes, (very handsome, I recollect, they looked), and some actually prowling about the sands in shooting-jackets (without a keeper), so prevalent was the mania for costume.

“ Do not lose your heart to any of them, before I have formally introduced you to the London world. You will hardly know them again, when you meet them there.

“ Give my kind regards to all with you ; and believe me,

“ Yours affectionately,

“ MARGARET FORDYCE.”

“No, she does not love him—she cannot love him—or she would not write so merrily,” was Eleanor’s reflection, as she folded the letter, and looked out over the sea; and her heart seemed to lean and rest itself on that thought.

But pleasant holidays must end. The Admiralty yacht was sent from Portsmouth to fetch Lady Raymond and her daughter, as the last kindly compliment from the officer who had known Sir John; and with many a lingering glance around her, Eleanor stepped into the boat with the rest of her party, and was taken on board. The wind seemed to have guessed her reluctance to leave the island, for after lazily impelling the ‘Fanny’ about one-third of her course, it fell to a dead calm. The slackening sails flapped noiselessly to and fro, and then hung like a dead bird’s wings against the masts. Godfrey fidgeted, and took short turns on deck.

Eleanor sat apart, gazing on the sunset sky. She was thinking again of Lady Margaret ; all she had lost by declining to accompany them—by not being able to sail—by not being able to ride ;—and how, in a few days, they should all be together again.

“ What a heavenly evening,” said she to David Stuart, as he came and sate down by her. “ Look at those soft strange tints, which melt so gradually that you cannot tell where one begins and another ends ; and yet one side of the sky is ruby crimson and the other sapphire blue. How still, how lovely ! now could I fancy myself a spirit journeying with its guardian angel to another world : but we are going back to the real common world, and its busy people,” and Eleanor heaved a sigh.

“ We will have another holiday when the London season is over,” said David.

“ I wish it was over, or never to begin ; I have no wish to see the world at all ; I shall

never be able to talk to strangers. Am I clever, Guardy? When I had no one but Emma Fordyce to compare myself with, I felt as if I was; and now that I compare myself with Lady Margaret—”

“ She is nearly six-and-twenty and you are scarcely seventeen. That is a superiority of age; it is one which involves others: a little more reading of books and men, a little more knowledge of the world, and a greater aptitude of conversation. When your understanding is matured, I think you will master difficult subjects with greater ease than Lady Margaret. You need not doubt your own powers.

“ And every spirit as it is more pure,
And hath in it the more of heavenly light:
So it the fairer body doth procure,
To habit in.”

David repeated Spenser’s beautiful lines in a low murmuring tone; he was watching

Eleanor, who had taken off her bonnet, and was looking down into the fathomless sea. There she beheld the ever-haunting image of Lady Margaret's lovely face. Was she indeed six-and-twenty—so near thirty? She thought women near thirty ought to look a little withered, and faded, and old. That radiant creature—was it possible? The wonder occupied her so, that she did not heed the compliment to her own beauty conveyed in the lines her guardian had quoted. Presently he spoke again.

“Your mind has made a great start lately, Eleanor.”

“I have read so much and so carefully. I have felt my own deficiency so much more. When I hear you talking with Lady Margaret, I feel how immeasurably inferior I am. I comprehend what a sacrifice you made, settling at Aspendale with an invalid and a foolish child, instead of such society as would suit you.”

“Do you think you do not suit me?”

“I think,” said she earnestly, though with some embarrassment of manner, “that not understanding a person on the subjects which interest them, puts one in a sort of exile from them. I have felt, when some subject was started, of which I was wholly ignorant, as if there were suddenly a great gap between us, over which I longed to throw a bridge. Those who have read the same books, and know the same things, must be more welcome to you—more constantly in your thoughts—”

Eleanor stopped, confused. David answered in an agitated voice.

“No one is constantly in my thoughts but you, Eleanor. Would to God it were otherwise,” continued he passionately and sorrowfully. “Waking or sleeping, abroad or at home, in the hush of study or the tumult of business, I see your dear eyes between me and my books, between me and

the sky, between me and all that is in heaven and earth,—reproaching me !”

“ Reproaching you !”

At this moment an exclamation from the man at the helm, an imperious shout from Godfrey, and a sudden confusion on board, startled them.

“ We shall be run down !” said David.

Lady Raymond and Emma shrieked ; the sailors swore ; Godfrey shouted again. A heavy black brig drifted down upon them ; there was no wind, either to increase the danger, or enable them to evade it. Every one seemed asleep on board the brig, except the watch on deck. After a moment of terror, confusion, and noise, the vessels glided free of each other, grazing slightly as they passed. With a mechanical impulse of protection, David Stuart had encircled Eleanor with one arm, while he clung to the ropes with the other. He released her gently ;

and as he replaced the heavy boat cloak in which she had been sheltered, but which had dropped from her shoulders as she started up in alarm, he murmured tenderly :

“ Were you frightened, dearest child ? ”

Eleanor strove to answer, “ No ! ” Her heart beat wildly ; she felt no fear ; she only felt that if they had all died at that moment, she could have died happy ; that if they had sunk down in that cold sea, and perished there, she would have been contented to know, as she yielded up life in his arms, that no one wiser, or better, or cleverer, or more beautiful than herself, could part her from David Stuart. Such a death had no terrors. In the strange excitement of the hour, when he praised her for her courage, she lifted her shy, averted eyes for an instant, with the desperate words trembling on her lips :

“ Why should I fear to die, dying with you ? ”

It was but for an instant. The shy eyes were veiled more timidly than ever, and the wild passionate thought sunk down again to her heart, as a frightened and weary bird sinks fluttering down on its nest.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELEANOR MAKES A CONQUEST.

THE arrangements for a season in London were now to be made, a house to be taken, a double establishment formed, with Lady Margaret as head. She could not offer Eleanor a home: she had none of her own.

Since her widowhood, she had lived principally with the Dowager Duchess, in Italy. Her brother at first intended that she should reside with him, but that did not suit his wife. The Duchess of Lanark, though she had

also many merits, had a great fault. Lady Margaret, in her sweet cheerful way, said every one had their fault, and we should be prepared to make allowance. The Duchess of Lanark's fault was one very opposite to Margaret's nature. Her pretty little Grace was of a very jealous disposition. She did not like going out with her sister-in-law. She loved and admired Margaret, but she was restless when others did the same. Somehow she felt eclipsed in her own home, when Margaret was there. The perfect tact which springs from perfect temper, taught Margaret what to do. She never sang at Lanark's Lodge. The Duchess did not like people to sing, unless they sang contralto seconds, and unfortunately Lady Margaret's voice went to C in alt. She never played the harp: the Duchess played the harp—played it beautifully; wonderfully; with arms as white and perfect as those which the Venus Anadyomene might have

lifted above the sea-foam, and little pink-tipped rapid fingers so delicate and taper, that you felt, as a French attaché once told the Duchess, that “it was *merveilleux* how they could pinch the cords,” so as to produce such full-sounding, pleasant music as they did. Then Margaret had to dress Euphemia with great simplicity. The Duchess did not like the child to be confounded with her cousins the Ladies Maitland, especially since a certain occasion, when some stranger, imagining Phemy to be the Duke’s youngest daughter, told him that she was the prettiest, and resembled him the most of all his children.

This childish jealousy of temper had given rise to occasional summer-storms, in spite of Margaret’s willingness to “efface herself” in behalf of her sister-in-law. The latter had fits of displeasure, extremely puzzling to lookers-on, and puzzling at first to Margaret,

inasmuch as it was impossible to reconcile the degree of anger with the apparent cause ; nor was the pretty Duchess herself, perhaps, always aware of the real root of her *guignon* against her good-humoured sister-in-law. She never analyzed her feelings, or attempted to control them. She had been a spoiled child, and she was now a wife, cherished and indulged, perhaps, beyond her actual deserts.

But Margaret grew accustomed to the peevish little reproaches made on trivial occasions, and with her usual generosity, she “made allowance.” In the main, the Duchess was kind ; she always meant kindly. Her feelings were quick and keen. In hours of affliction and distress, she was tender and loving. She grudged neither time nor trouble to render service ; but in the prosperity of those she had served, she grew restless. She could wipe away their tears, but they must beware how their smiles occupied or distracted any of the

numerous circle, whose duty it was to bow down only to her graceful little self. Any one was welcome to stand next her, but none above her ; and in the matter of conquests and admiration, people must only glean what she left. She was not positively glad when strangers thought Phemy awkward, or her beautiful mother too large in figure ; but she was more complacent.

Margaret, too, had her fault. I never saw perfection in real life, or anywhere but in the pages of some impossible romance. I am loath to admit it, and I hope the reader will remember that I mention it in the strictest confidence ; but I think Margaret was a little vain of being so very charming as she certainly was and was admitted to be, by all who had the happiness of knowing her. She was vain, too, of comprehending the leading questions in politics, and subjects which are generally supposed to interest men only. She was glad to be popular with women, and

even children, but she was proud of being popular with men ; and popular she was, to her heart's content. From her brother, Lanark, who simply thought there had been nothing like her since Eve was presented to Adam in Paradise, to the chance acquaintance who had the good luck to sit by her at dinner the day before, a unanimous vote was always given in her favour. The sweet cordiality of her manner had no forwardness in it, and was balanced by a certain stateliness and dignity, hereditary and natural ; while her perfect temper, active kindness, sincere and unostentatious piety, increased to love the admiration already inspired by her gaiety, accomplishment and beauty.

Now, the lovely little Duchess of Lanark belonged, as I have already hinted, to a class of women it is difficult to define : the class of conquest-makers. Women who look on at a

temptation they do not feel, and which they have no intention of sharing: women, many of whom I firmly believe would rather die than overstep the boundary which divides them from sin, but who cannot resist the dangerous triumph of encouraging the victims of their beauty. She took great pains to secure her conquests, even to the risk of her fair name; but if any admirer ventured to declare himself, she was amazed, annoyed, and generally quarrelled with him; throwing herself on the frank-hearted affection of her husband for protection against what rumours might arise out of the event, and visiting with unsparing dislike whoever was the next object of attention: a dog-in-the-manger system of coquetry not uncommon among women of the world.

The Duke of Lanark was a very proud man, and of a trustful disposition. He thought his wife rash; he believed her true;

he did not choose that the world should probe what he felt. So, gravely, calmly, with what unconsciousness he could assume, he bore the occasional brunt of evil reports. So borne, they died away or passed lightly over. He took his own part against the world—instead of making common cause with the world against himself, as is the custom with some men.

The Duchess respected and felt grateful to him. If she did not absolutely relinquish conquest-making, she indulged more rarely in a heart-hunt. It was a home that bettered as years rolled on ; but it was a home in which Margaret was *de trop*. It was impossible to make conquests comfortably, with Margaret in the house. Her beauty dazzled and absorbed the most frivolous ; and something real, honest, and earnest in her nature, attracted the serious. I doubt whether the last thought at night of two-thirds of the guests in any

country-house where she happened to be staying, was not satisfaction at the certainty of meeting her fresh glad smiles at breakfast next morning. There might be those who would deny that they thought about her at all, but I would not give much credit to the assertion.

And so it was, that Margaret became an occasional visitor, not a resident at Lanark's Lodge ; remaining on the best possible terms with her graceful little sister-in-law, who wrote her very long letters and professed (and indeed felt) a very sincere interest in all that concerned her.

Almost the first people Eleanor saw in London, were the Duke and Duchess of Lanark, and she heard them announced and looked at the Duke as he entered, with eager interest. In complexion, and a certain frank stateliness of demeanor, there might be a likeness to Margaret, but in nothing else. The Duchess was

lovely; very small in stature, but with the figure of a nymph; large, soft, surprised eyes, like a child's; a little affected, and excessively graceful.

Eleanor was disappointed in the Duke's appearance; she had expected Margaret's brother to be wonderfully handsome; but in character they were the counterpart of each other, and she sighed to think what a happy brother and sister they were, and how unlike the terms on which she and Godfrey lived, was the proud fondness they felt for each other.

The Duke saw her, too, with interest; and his manner to his sister's charge was one of protecting tenderness. It was his manner to all women—the feeling of his heart towards them. No shadow of jealousy could have entered even his Duchess's mind, and yet all women felt instinctively that he was one from whom indulgence and chivalry to the sex were certain. Many women envied the Duchess her home; but it is not always the women

who have happy homes who set most value on them.

Eleanor did not like London. Perhaps no one does, who is brought suddenly into that great whirlpool, and does not stay long enough to form their own circle among the eddies on the surface. Long enough to make slight acquaintances, but not to form friendships ; long enough to see the fermenting of the scum, but not to taste the wholesome liquor underneath ; to see the insolence, jealousy, frivolity, and mad battles of fashion, but not to learn that, with a few pampered and incorrigible instances, good hearts arise out of that turmoil, and go forth to home duties, to great charities, and rational employment of their portion of that divine inheritance—Time.

Eleanor's tastes, too, were essentially solid. She was amazed at the ballet, and bored at the balls. Dancing had no charms for her ; reading, painting, riding, music, were her holiday

occupations. These her guardian taught her ; these he could share in. He was gone to Marseilles on business, and the London season struggled on without him.

When it was over, never was there a beautiful young heiress so glad to return to the country. She left London without regret, and her general acquaintance saw her go with indifference ; the men said she was cold and absent ; the women that she was shy and stupid ; the Duke wondered that she had not been able to “ catch something of Margaret’s charming manner ;” the Duchess (with rather doubtful sympathy) observed that her sister-in-law “ extinguished” poor Miss Raymond. Yet Eleanor’s beauty was undeniable. There was no brilliancy, no contrast ; nymph-like, classical, colourless—the pale red of the small melancholy mouth, the grey hazel of the shy, passionate eyes, the soft brown of her luxuriant hair, all melting into one harmony of tint like a fair Italian picture—she

stood before you. In vain the women said she wanted complexion ; the men that she was too stately ; the dancers that she was awkward ; the fashionables (in spite of Margaret's reforms) that she was ill-dressed. You felt, when all was said, that there stood the type of the old ideal loveliness, worshipped in the groves and temples of olden times ; when the heathen heart, unenlightened and unable to reclaim even its divine aspirations from the trammels of sensuality, adored the Creator in form instead of spirit, and knelt to beauty as the nearest idea of God ! Lone as a statue in a garden, she stood in that busy murmuring world, and recalled to you other statues ; fountains, and fair columns ; the dim aisles of foreign churches ; the shadows of cypresses on warm Italian terraces ; all that the mind could conceive or remember of classic perfection. She was the beau ideal of an artist's dream—the moving frontispiece to a poet's thought.

And like many other such ideal-looking personages, the strongest passion that Eleanor inspired, during her brief stay in London, was in a heart as coarse as ever was cast in nature's mould. Many young men, of small means and great expenses, thought of proposing for the beautiful heiress. One or two were seriously enamoured, or thought themselves so; but only Sir Stephen Penrhyn turned pale with sudden emotion when he heard they were to leave town. Only Sir Stephen Penrhyn came, at a late, undue hour in his boots and frock coat, to the Duke of Lanark's library, to ask his advice, having been wandering about all day considering how he could plead his cause, and who he had best plead it to; and convinced (that greatest proof of love) that the whole world of bachelors were forthwith about to propose for Miss Raymond, and that therefore his only chance lay in immediate measures for securing her hand.

Their acquaintance had not begun very auspiciously. Eleanor was riding over Wimbledon Common with the Duke of Lanark and a party of ladies and gentlemen, when her dog Ruellach suddenly chased the dog belonging to a gentleman in advance of the party. The animals quarrelled, and Ruellach, who was much the most powerful, had seized his adversary by the throat; when the gentleman whose dog was worsted, hastily dismounting, threw the reins of his horse to his groom, and violently chastised the enemy with a heavy riding whip. Eleanor's cheek crimsoned, and her eyes filled with tears.

“The man will kill my dog!” said she.

The Duke of Lanark rode up to the stranger.

“I am sure you are not aware,” said he, courteously, “that the greyhound belongs to a lady in our party: to this young lady,” added he, as Sir Stephen Penrhyn turned

round with an angry stare, and Eleanor cantered her horse to the spot.

Cymon when he was softened by the sight of Iphigenia, could not have been more struck than the stranger at the aspect of Eleanor ; flushed, tearful, a mixture of indignation, reproach, and compassion, agitating her beautiful features. He stammered out apologies ; he wiped the dog's foot, which was cut by one of the heavy blows of the whip, with his handkerchief. He pleaded with Eleanor that the dog had pursued and chased his own without provocation, and that it was a formidable looking creature. There was nothing for it but to bow and accept his excuses, and turn homewards ; poor Ruellach limping along by Eleanor's horse, footsore, bleeding, and greatly exhausted by the violent beating he had received.

“ Ruellach, poor friend,” Eleanor said to him in tender, comforting tones, from time to

time. “Ruellach, poor friend,” she repeated, as she sate looking at him after they reached home; lying on the carpet, turning on her, while she spoke, a grateful glance from wistful, sleepy, bloodshot eyes, his foot swelled, and starting with pain. And she thought of the day her guardian brought the poor dumb companion from Scotland, two years ago, that seemed two ages; and of the dreadful strength of that man’s arm, as he unmercifully lashed it; and Eleanor felt, on behalf of herself and her dog, that she was extremely ill-used.

From that day forth Sir Stephen Penrhyn haunted Eleanor Raymond like her shadow. He had never seen her before. He did not belong to the “smart set” of London society; he had not cared to belong to it. But now every one who gave or procured for him invitations which ensured his meeting Miss Raymond, commanded his gratitude; and as

he had the reputation of being very rich, people were glad to oblige him. He got up late, to begin the day as near as possible to the hour when he might see her. He called incessantly ; he paid Ruellach the most devoted attention ; he lingered in the park even when Eleanor was riding and occupied with others, till he saw her leave it. He ate his dinner in a sort of dream, as something done to fill up a gap of time in which he could not be in her society. There was no luxury he did not lend or give to a boy cousin of Lady Margaret's, a pretty little dandy getting through his first season in London on two hundred a-year, who got numberless invitations for “his friend Penrhyn,” and told him what parties Eleanor was going to every evening.

Sir Stephen's Highland place, Castle Penrhyn, was in very fair Scotch neighbourhood of Lanark's Lodge ; that is,

about twenty miles distant. The Duke knew his family: he received him very civilly and cordially. Lady Margaret gave him bright smiles, and jested Eleanor on her conquest. Even Ruellach, poor generous, forgiving Ruellach, welcomed him when he came with mute tokens of friendly recognition. Eleanor alone remained cold and shy; but then she was cold and shy to every one. So every one said; and Mr. David Stuart was not there to contradict the opinion.

The Duke, who was accustomed to the frank, impulsive manner of his beloved sister, and the demonstrativeness of his graceful little Duchess, declined offering any opinion as to the absence of evident preference in Eleanor's mode of treating her would-be suitor. He advised Sir Stephen to write to Mr. Stuart, and explain himself; and then no doubt he would receive an invitation from Lady Raymond, and might ascertain what chance he

had of pleasing her daughter. At present, Mr. Stuart was still at Marseilles; but in a short time he was expected at Aspendale. The Duke did not know him; he had never met him; he could only therefore refer Sir Stephen to Lady Margaret for conjectures how Eleanor's guardian was likely to receive proposals for his ward, and what sort of person he was. And Lady Margaret blushed scarlet, and said Mr. Stuart was a most amiable and excellent person, and would think only of what would best secure Eleanor's happiness, to whom of course Sir Stephen must make himself acceptable as best he could. She had not perceived that Eleanor had distinguished any one. She was always shy. Did not think she was more distant with Sir Stephen, than with other acquaintance. On the contrary.

And with the slender comfort of this “on the contrary,” as a wind up to all

his questions, Sir Stephen Penrhyn saw that strange beautiful vision of a girl so unlike all the women he had ever met in his life, vanish from the haunts where he had daily contrived to meet her. I do not know anything more dismally blank than London when the *one* person has left it, or anything more curious than the impression given, by the absence of a unit out of the countless population, that the great swarming city has been emptied of all its inhabitants. When Sir Stephen's valet asked for orders for the groom next day, his master had none to give. It did not appear to him that there was anywhere to ride to. He took a sauntering, moody walk, mechanically bending his steps to the Serpentine; his eye wandered over the mass of open and closed carriages, equestrian and pedestrian passers-by, without particularizing. He knew there was nothing to see—no one to recognise. *She* had left

town ! Life was at a standstill till he could write to Mr. Stuart, and receive an answer ; a windmill whose sails had stopped work

CHAPTER XIV.

PROPOSALS OF MARRIAGE.

MR. DAVID STUART returned from Marseilles thin and dispirited. He said he had had a great deal of trouble, and a great deal of fatigue; and it was some time before even Margaret's cheerful laugh and winning ways, could sun him into comparative cheerfulness. As to Eleanor, poor little chameleon that she was, she felt far more inclined to take the reflection of his sadness into her own soul, than to remove it by—

“Quips and cranks and wreathed smiles.”

They did not talk much of the London season, or the time they had been asunder. She had written to him all she thought important or entertaining during their stay in town. They relapsed into old habits, and old subjects of thought, and resumed former occupations: the rides which were so delightful to Eleanor, and the songs which no longer disturbed her so much; for she began to feel instinctively sure that it was with *her*, not Margaret, that David's thoughts were absorbed; and when his eyes wore that look of wistful supplication she first saw in them the day they talked of churches by the roaring Linn—the day he entreated her to “bear with him”—she translated it in her own way: into the doubt and fear that must cloud the progress of an attachment, which the world would think so imprudent on her part.

He evidently struggled against it; he would not suffer people to say he took ad-

vantage of his position as her guardian, and his residence at Aspendale, to persuade her to a marriage her friends must disapprove. Miss Raymond comprehended this: three months of a London season teaches us more than six years in the country. She comprehended that the choice which she had made to satisfy herself, would be extremely unsatisfactory to others. She guessed what “the world” would say. She had made its acquaintance in Hyde Park, at the Opera, and at Almack’s. She knew how it wagged its tongue on all occasions, and how adverse its decision on her affairs would be. She did not care about the world; but she was sorry and perplexed when she thought of her mother. The account of her success in those realms of fashion of which Lady Raymond had never more than brief glimpses, roused more ambition in the gentle widow to see Eleanor make a splendid match, than had as yet been obvious to her

daughter; and Lady Raymond had above all things a horror of poverty—she had experienced it. Godfrey, though he had married for love himself, Eleanor knew would sneer at her choice, and blame the object of it. But she was determined, nevertheless; only she rather shrank from looking into the future. She wished things to remain as they were for the present, till she was of age perhaps, when no one could suppose her incapable of judging matters with the worldly wisdom peculiar to that venerable time of life.

Now and then, it is true, when her guardian seemed more than usually unhappy, she longed restlessly for some event that should force an explanation, which would put an end to his pain and uncertainty. That event would be, of course, some one else proposing for her: she would refuse: her guardian would ask her why: she would reply that she loved another. He would ask who:

nothing could be more simple so far: and she would tell him, at least she thought and hoped she should by that time have courage to give him to understand—the truth: but at present the very thought set her heart beating with such exceeding terror and confusion, that certainly Mr. Stuart would have gleaned little from any explanation she might offer.

Sir Stephen Penrhyn did not propose immediately. He had a sister; a sister much his senior, and who both before and since his father's death had governed the whole family with unlimited sway. She had been married to a Sir Patrick Macfarren, and was now a widow. Sir Stephen went to Scotland to break to her the important fact of his intentions. He had, as we have seen, considerable doubts of the success of his suit with Eleanor; but it appears that he did not think it necessary to mention those

doubts to Lady Macfarren ; to whom, on the contrary, he narrated the entertaining fable, that he had made the conquest of a most beautiful young heiress who passionately returned his regard, but that he had suspended his declaration in form to her friends, till he had paid the respect due to his sole surviving relative of informing her of the fact. And Lady Macfarren gruffly hoped he had not been “ taken in,” and said she thought there was little need to have gone hunting for a wife in the English counties, when he might have had “ just the pick and choose” of the noblest-born ladies in Scotland ; and being pressed by her brother to come to town in furtherance of this matter, she stated it to be her opinion that it was just as easy for “ other folk” to come to Edinburgh, as for her to go to London, and that therefore he might hold his wedding in that modern Athens, or perform the cere-

mony without its being blessed by the light of her countenance ; with which instructions Sir Stephen returned to his lodgings in Grosvenor Street, and mused upon them, riding in the dusty and empty park.

Finally, he resolved to postpone sending the letter he had concocted for the perusal of the omnipotent guardian, till Lady Margaret should return to town on her way to Lanark's Lodge, when he would consult her as to its contents. This involved the patience of a very few days longer. He thought Lady Margaret not unfavourable to his love ; and he had that vague sort of conviction of her influence over every one, that he felt as if she could smooth every difficulty that might arise, either with mother, guardian, or the young lady herself.

And, indeed, Lady Margaret saw no reason why Sir Stephen should not be Miss Raymond's husband. She thought the sooner

Eleanor was married the better. Her position was a strange one. All the fragmentary elements of protection which surrounded her, consisting of an invalid mother, scolding half-brother and romantic guardian, could not and did not, in Margaret's opinion, make up the stable, happy home, which renders it indifferent whether a girl settles early in life or not. The lovely chaperon did not see how, now that Eleanor was a woman instead of a child, that anomalous household could hold together; how, especially after Godfrey should again go to sea, Eleanor was to continue living with this handsome attractive man who was no relation to her family, and whose age and appearance so ill assorted with the original "Guardy" of old comedies, whose title Lieutenant Marsden had so wrathfully objected to his acquiring.

Nor was that, "on the contrary," with which Sir Stephen's anxieties had been

pacified the day he made his adieu, at all an exaggeration. Margaret always spoke the simple, honest truth. She never departed from it, for her own sake or the sake of others. It was the simple truth then, that Eleanor's manner had rather more welcome in it for Sir Stephen than for others. Eleanor disliked him, because he had beat her dog ; that beloved favourite which had been presented to her by her beloved guardian. But in her heart she thought herself very unjust to entertain so strong an aversion to a gentleman who had after all only beat a dog that attacked his own ; and who had been so very kind about it afterwards, bringing a particular ointment for Ruellach's foot, and dressing it himself for the few days it continued sore and inflamed, and long after it was well persisting in calling (to see how the animal prospered) ; therefore Miss Raymond made an effort with herself and smiled shy

smiles now and then at Sir Stephen, to show she was not utterly implacable; and patted his rough terrier with a friendly and pardoning hand, as the involuntary and innocent cause of Ruclach's tribulation and wounds.

And though this may be held to be small encouragement to a lover, such things are matters of comparison; and Eleanor gave no encouragement whatever to any one else. Not even to Lord Edgar Oswald Beauregard, second son of the Duke of Beauregard, the most exquisite dandy of his day, who sang, rode, and danced, and had such a profile as never was seen except in the Vatican chipped and chiselled in ancient marble. Not even, I repeat, to Lord Edgar, who, though he mentioned it to no one, had a far more sincere conviction than Sir Stephen that he had only to propose, to be welcomed with transport by the young

heiress and all her relations and friends, whosoever, and wheresoever, they might be. But Lord Edgar did not propose just at present, because another young lady came out that same season who had ten thousand a-year, and Eleanor had only five, and he naturally waited to see whether he had any chance with the ten, before he dropped to the five. At present the odds were twenty to one in favour of the ten thousand, who was greatly dazzled by the appearance of the beautiful dandy, and could scarcely be curbed by her prudent old father in her enthusiastic confidence that she was beloved entirely "for herself," by this Apollo of the English aristocracy.

Sir Stephen did not feel Lord Edgar's uncertainty. Rich or poor, no one had ever struck his fancy with the same wild passion as Eleanor. If she had been a beggar-maid, he would have copied the example of King

Cophetua, a monarch whose fame has perhaps been more extensive than the circle of his imitators.

So Sir Stephen read over daily the copy of his letter to Mr. Stuart, and scratched a word out and put a word in (for he was not greatly addicted to letter-writing, and the composition cost him some trouble), till there it was, a clear business-like explanatory letter, meet for a guardian to read who was bound to see his ward disposed of to proper advantage. He explained how he had eighteen thousand a-year, a place in Wales and a place in Scotland; how he intended to stand for the county in which his Welsh property was situated, and was sure of success; and how he was connected with a marquis, a viscount, and no less than three earls, one of whom, the Earl of Peebles, being an invalid sixty-five years old, unmarried, and without children, it was

highly probable Eleanor might, in the course of years, attain the honour of being countess of that name. Together with other particulars, such as he judged might, with the prudent indulgent and exemplary gentleman Lady Margaret had described Mr. Stuart to be, weigh in a suitor's behalf, and cause a favourable decision of his claims.

As to Eleanor, he refused to doubt his power of pleasing her, even while his mind misgave him. He had never been in love before, and failed to win. To be sure, his previous fancies had been in a very different line; but he reflected that it was no use “shilly-shallying:” a fellow would never take a dangerous leap out hunting, if he sate on his horse craning and looking over his neck at it. He would propose. “Faint heart never won fair lady,” (which was one of the very few quotations Sir Stephen knew) and

so he read his letter once more, and copied it out for the last time, previous to submitting it for Lady Margaret's approval.

CHAPTER XV.

GODFREY EXAMINES THE CONSCIENCES OF OTHERS.

LADY MARGARET was still at Aspendale, cheering David, coaxing Eleanor, amusing Lady Raymond, and battling with Godfrey's prejudices. His last trouble was that Euphemia did not go to church twice on Sundays. It was most improper that the child should be brought up to consider her Sunday duties over, when the morning service was concluded and she came home to her roast fowl and bread pudding. He wondered that Lady Margaret, with her excellent principles, did not see this.

“Euphemia is not very strong, and I doubt whether any child can really force its attention through two long services such as our Church appoints,” said Margaret, quietly.

“It is sufficient that the Church has appointed them. A child ought to be compelled to attend, and corrected if it is inattentive; that would be my system.”

“It is not mine; and I should hope my poor child’s evening prayers are not the less acceptable to a merciful Creator because she has not sat half asleep through a long sermon in the afternoon.”

“It is most pernicious to teach her that she may judge how much, or how little, she is to accept of the forms of her Church; that she may do as she likes about prayer. I must confess I was somewhat astonished when I saw you both this evening sitting in the church porch, knowing that Euphemia had not attended service.”

“ But have we no’ right to sit in the porch unless she attends afternoon service ? ” said Lady Margaret, laughing. “ We sat there to enjoy the sweet evening, Euphemia being tired. The clusters of the traveller’s joy and Virginia creeper, reminded us of the cemetery at Frankfort, and we were speaking of the beautiful inscription over the gate of that burial-ground—‘ God’s Rest.’ God’s evening rest, when the toil of life’s day is over ! Our talk was very innocent and unworldly, I assure you.”

“ Of course ; no doubt, Lady Margaret ; but she might have rested somewhere else. Not to attend church, and then to saunter past and sit down at the door ! ”

“ My dear Mr. Marsden, I should have been glad, instead of sitting down at the door, to have gone in with the child, and prayed in the church, but for the English custom of locking out prayers till next mar-

ket-day is over, and the Sabbath come round again. But I repeat that I consider two services a-day too much for Euphemia. Do you think she could learn nothing in the church porch? It is a solemn place. It is impossible to sit there, and not think of those who have passed through for many generations—the pious, the careless, the chance visitor, and the villager, who perhaps never heard prayers except in that one church; living and dying without ever straying from his native place! The very stones are worn away by the pacing of the feet of those whose prayers in this world are over. What congregations have poured silently out of the narrow entry, each bearing his own impression of the hour; none knowing what passed in the heart of his neighbour; none saying, ‘Brother, what smote you?’ and yet we know that at some time words spoken within, have consoled the grieving, rebuked the sinful,

converted the sceptic, or awakened the worldling. And the preacher has gone out last,—not knowing whether God has called, by the instrumentality of his weak voice, one soul nearer heaven than on the preceding Sabbath. A church porch on a summer's evening, is a sermon in itself."

"Sermons in stones, and good in everything," said David Stuart, with a smile.

He looked at Lady Margaret with such affectionate admiration, that Eleanor's heart fluttered. Perhaps she was a little influenced by it in the observation she made:

"I think Godfrey is right though, in saying we should beware of judging how much we will accept of forms. I think we stand on dangerous ground when we attempt to choose for ourselves out of appointed ceremonies. Like flowers and weak trees, we are the better of being trained, even against our natural bent. I think that is right,

though Godfrey always expresses himself harshly."

"And I think you are right, though you always express yourself affectedly," said her half-brother with something of a sneer.

The fallible David was provoked at his tone ; perhaps a little provoked also at the moderate upholding Eleanor had given to the excellent Pharisee ; and above all he was provoked at his interference with Lady Margaret.

He, too, had seen her sitting in the church porch ; talking with radiant, serious eyes, to her little girl, and had passed on, unwilling to break in upon her discourse. He thought Godfrey's lecture insolent and absurd, whatever truths it might involve.

"We are not disputing the value of forms," said he ; "though 'tis certain that I have seen fiercer hatred, more grasping avarice, more worldly ambition, more selfish

luxury, and more sneering at the misfortunes of neighbours, among professed religionists, and twice-a-day church-goers, than in any other set or section of society. It is well the days of burning and racking are gone by, or some of us would stand an excellent chance of torture, on the judgment of men every way our inferiors both in the theory and practice of religious duty."

"I do not know in what I am your inferior," said Godfrey, catching at the words, "unless it be in what I believe is termed in your country the 'gift of the gab'—stringing long sentences together. A man can see what he ought to do, and do it, without being inordinately clever or book-learned. Right is right, and wrong is wrong; church is church, and prayers are prayers. We are here to attend them, not to settle whether they are too long or not."

"I spoke generally, and not with a personal application to yourself," said David,

haughtily ; “ but if I must make a remark of that sort, I should say that whatever is right or wrong, your attempting to teach Lady Margaret how to bring up her own child, is presumptuous and ridiculous. Men of your stamp live under a singular delusion. Having made, or thinking you have made, your own peace with God, does not give you a right to disturb the peace of every one with whom you are sufficiently familiar to discuss these topics. Your own convictions, late or early, do not transform you suddenly into a sort of John the Baptist, a wandering preacher, calling on others to repent. Every one must abide by their own heart ; you are not their self-appointed judge. One man can kneel and fast ; another is too weary to kneel, too weak to fast. There must be a certain latitude and discretion, unless we were all cast in the same mould, body and soul.”

“ You are good enough to lecture men of

my stamp," said Godfrey, with excessive anger. "Now, give me leave to tell you, that men of *your* stamp, are men with indian-rubber consciences; men who stretch what they ought to do, to the length of what they want to do; men who find an excuse for themselves at all times, under all circumstances; men who can commit great sins, and forgive themselves so easily, that you would think they had done nothing at all; men to whom the fact of a temptation is sufficient apology for a crime—who won't stop at the beginning, and can't face the end—"

"Godfrey!" said Eleanor, in a voice choking with emotion.

But David Stuart walked slowly up to young Marsden, and laid his hand gently on his shoulder, as an elder brother might have done. He was deadly pale: he spoke in a faint altered tone. Lady Margaret and Eleanor looked at him with surprise.

“Godfrey,” said he, “you are right ; you are a better man than I am. I am unfit to guide or lecture any one ; and I ask your pardon for the expression, ‘men of your stamp.’ They *are* better than men of mine. Nevertheless, for your own sake, and the sake of those you love, strive for tolerance !”

After a pause, he added, hurriedly : “Let us have no more discussion : let us go out. Eleanor, will you come out ? The room is suffocating : the air here is like the air before an earthquake. Lady Margaret, do you remember the earthquake at Palermo ? how the ceilings cracked, and came down, and we thought the whole house would follow ? This reminds me of it.”

Lady Margaret said she thought it was a very sultry day ; and she added, rather timidly, she thought Mr. Stuart must be ill.

It was very seldom that Lady Margaret looked grave or mournful ; but the tender

beauty of her face at that moment, struck Eleanor.

“Oh!” thought the poor girl, “it is impossible that any one should be preferred to her. It is impossible he should think of me, while she is here. I wish she would go; I wish I had never seen her.”

It was by Eleanor’s side, nevertheless, that David Stuart ranged himself, as the party left the house for their walk.

“*You* are tolerant, my Eleanor,” said he, sadly, and as if the conversation had never been interrupted; “you are tolerant and generous. I believe there is nothing you could not forgive.”

“What have I to forgive? What ails you?” said Eleanor, in a gentle, pleading voice; but he did not reply.

“David Stuart has something heavy on his conscience,” said Godfrey sternly, as his wife passed her arm through his.

“Has he, dear?” said Emma, and she gave a little gulping sob; for nothing frightened Emma like a scene of any sort; she never understood what was the cause of dispute, or why people were so angry; but she comprehended that there was what schoolboys call “a row,” trembled while it lasted, felt relieved when it was over, and if Godfrey spoke very loud, or with unusual bitterness, generally cried, as infants do when grown people quarrel before them.

“He has something on his conscience,” thought Godfrey; and, occupied with that thought, he did not talk at all to his wife during their moody walk, nor did she attempt to win him from his silence. She walked on, looking over the corn-fields, full of blue flowers and red poppies, and wishing she had her baby boy with her; but she had been afraid to ask Godfrey to wait till she had put on the child’s straw hat, because,

when he was thinking of other men's consciences, he was apt to be rough and violent in his replies.

A heavy thunder-storm drove the whole party home again after a short interval. Eleanor lingered in her mother's dressing-room. When she came down, Lady Margaret had taken out her work : Godfrey was ruling the track of the 'Thetis,' across the Pacific : Emma was fitting his pen in a small pair of compasses : David Stuart was watching the rain from the window. They seemed a very silent party. Eleanor glanced at David—hesitated—and sate down by Lady Margaret. The latter looked up, and smiled archly.

"I have had a letter by this evening's post," said she, "from Sir Stephen Penrhyn ; he wants to submit to me a certain epistle which is coming here. I dare say, Mr. Stuart, in all the long letters Eleanor wrote to you, she never told you the adventure poor Ruellach had on Wimbledon Common ?"

“Yes, she told me a gentleman had beaten Ruellach ; it was some time ago.”

“And has she never mentioned the gentleman since ?”

“Why should I mention him ?” said Eleanor, rather indignantly.

“Well now,” said Lady Margaret playfully, “I think myself a very ill-used chaperon. I take a young lady to town, and to all the smart balls and parties. In our very first day’s fishing we spear a salmon ; that is, in our very first season we catch Sir Stephen Penrhyn—a very rich and puissant seigneur—and no credit is given to me, and Eleanor asks why she should mention him ! Mr. Stuart, I give you fair notice to expect a proposal any morning, in the middle of your breakfast ; your consent in form, lawyer’s parchments, settlements, my invitation to the wedding—all that is in immediate perspective. If Eleanor won’t marry him, then, in the distant perspective, we have another season in

town, and my duties as chaperon recommence next spring."

Eleanor lifted her eyes with a half blush and smile to her guardian's face ; its expression startled her. Pale, haggard, and scrutinising, his gaze was fixed upon her as if he would read her very soul. With a rapid furtive glance she scanned the rest of the party ; Margaret's head was bent over her work with a pretty mischievous smile ; Godfrey was still ruling the ship's track ; and Emma was watching him. Eleanor breathed more freely : she was unobserved : she clasped her hands with a look of deprecating affection : never did dumb expression say so well, "be comforted, it is *you* whom I love !" Margaret raised her eyes at the same moment ; David made an effort to speak.

"Eleanor is very young," said he.

The words stuck in his throat ; he looked wistfully at Lady Margaret ; came forward to the table ; opened a book ; shut it ; took up

the scissors which lay by Margaret's work ; attempted to speak again ; turned ghastly pale ; and almost immediately left the room. One of Margaret's sudden blushes suffused her brow, cheek, and neck. She looked at Eleanor, but Eleanor's eyes were fixed on the handle of the door which her guardian had just closed. Was it possible that David Stuart was himself in love with Eleanor ?

Like the shock given by the torpedo, the same thought thrilled at once through all the little circle. Margaret somehow thought it the most unlikely thing in the world ; and yet what else could she suppose, after the scene she had witnessed ? To Godfrey, who had looked sternly at the pale, gazing man as he stood at the table, it was

“ Confirmation strong,
As proofs of Holy writ ;”

and his anger rose like the waves in a storm, at this crowning offence of his half-sister's

guardian. Even common-place Emma seemed struck by some sudden revelation; even to her, it appeared, "that Mr. Stuart did not at all like the thoughts of Eleanor's marrying."

But for Eleanor herself, who shall tell the feelings that fluttered in her heart? She answered Godfrey's flashing glance with a smile almost of triumph, and moved to the window where David had been standing. She flung it open, and stood looking on the roses sparkling with rain, and the tall gleaming lilies splendid in their freshened beauty. The chorus of birds, so joyous, so multitudinous after a thunder-storm, sounded in her ear; the drops hung like jewels on the leaves; the scent of heliotrope and geranium met the breeze, already loaded with the perfume of distant clover-fields. It blew softly over her cheek and hair, like the lady in Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*—

" You might see that the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there, and left passion behind."

She trembled with the very certainty of her joy ; for now she *knew* he loved her. Before this hour she had hoped it, but now she knew it ; now she was sure of it ; now it was clear as the glorious sun, whose warmth was drinking up the vanishing drops from the smooth lawn before her. And deeply must he love her, so to lose all self-command when her marriage with another was mentioned. But not more deeply than she loved him : that was impossible ! That he should love her as well, was all she asked of heaven.

Two days after this little scene, Lady Margaret's visit ended, and she went away. She bade Eleanor farewell with tender seriousness.

“ God bless you, dear child, and make you happy, whatever is decided for your future,” was all she said.

She had never alluded to what had passed ; no one had spoken of it, at least not to

Eleanor. And Miss Raymond embraced her chaperon with more frank affection in that parting hour, than all her grace, kindness, and charm, had been able to inspire, while the doubt of a possible rivalry remained.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

THOUGH Godfrey had said nothing to Eleanor, he had said a great deal to his mother; so much, indeed, that Sir Stephen Penrhyn himself could scarcely be more anxious for his marriage than Lady Raymond. She really began to take the same view as Godfrey, of the heinousness of her late husband's secretary aspiring to marry her beautiful heiress; and in her maternal solicitude for her daughter, and weak submission to her son, to adopt his notions that the

whole residence at Aspendale, while Eleanor had been as yet only a child, the refusal to entrust her education to any other hands but his own, the pains he had taken with her, were so many portions of a deep-laid plot to obtain an influence over her affections, which no one should be able to uproot. She blamed herself for having invited his stay in the first instance. She entreated Godfrey to consider what should be done, and whether it was likely Mr. Stuart would venture to declare himself. Godfrey thought not; he thought he would wait till Eleanor was of age, finding pretexts in the meanwhile for not bestowing her hand on any suitor.

Lady Raymond was rather sorry Lord Edgar did not propose: she would have much liked a Duke's son for her son-in-law. She wished it were possible to wait, to see whether Eleanor might not make some very splendid match. But Sir Stephen was a

million times preferable, to the chance of her becoming Mrs. David Stuart. Poor child ! she must be bewitched to desire such a thing. Perhaps she did not desire it : perhaps all this time Godfrey was mistaken as to the thoughts that were passing in his sister's mind, when she smiled as she passed him, crossing to the window, the day of the thunderstorm. She might be thinking of Sir Stephen. Lady Margaret had persisted that what little encouragement Eleanor seemed capable of giving to any one, was certainly bestowed on him. Lady Margaret said *she* did not think him handsome, but most people did. He had a very fine figure, and rode particularly well, which was all she had observed.

Altogether the doubt of Eleanor's sentiments was so great, that Lady Raymond thought it more prudent to leave her daughter unquestioned. She contented her-

self with giving Godfrey plenipotentiary powers to speak to Mr. Stuart on the subject of Sir Stephen's attachment, and to make him understand that Miss Raymond's family approved of it, and desired to see her married.

David Stuart heard all with stony gravity. He then said that he agreed with Godfrey, that in Eleanor's position the sooner she was married the better, and that he would do anything, short of forcing her inclinations, to bring about the desired event. Godfrey left him with a positive abhorrence of the profound hypocrisy and self-command which had succeeded his evident grief, alarm, and agitation, when this marriage was first mentioned.

At length Sir Stephen's letter came. The morning it arrived, Mr. Stuart sent in word that he was too unwell to breakfast with the family, but when Miss Raymond had breakfasted, he wished her to come and speak with

him in the library. Eleanor obeyed the summons—she was pale, but resolved. She felt too certain of his attachment, and his consequent struggles, to entertain a fear, natural under the circumstances, that he would think her forward for granting a love that as yet had never been sued for. Perhaps now he meant to tell her he loved her, and adjure her not to bestow her hand on another. That would be a far easier conclusion, than the confused notion of giving him to understand that she would not marry another, because she preferred himself. She hoped it would be so. It would spare her much.

When she entered the library, she saw at a glance how ghastly pale and ill her guardian looked. But that did not startle or disturb her; she had expected it. She expected to see him look as he did the day of the storm. He said, in a low calm tone

that he supposed she knew why he had sent for her ; and she said firmly that she guessed it was to hear of Sir Stephen Penrhyn's proposals. He read the letter which had cost Sir Stephen so much pain and perplexity, and paused. He then pointed out the advantages of the marriage, and the wish Lady Raymond had expressed to see her daughter settled. Eleanor trembled. Like many persons in great agitation, she tried to assume a playfulness of manner.

“ I must refuse him, Guardy, nevertheless,” said she. There was a Shakespeare lying on the table, she drew it towards her : “ I must refuse him like Olivia, and for Olivia’s reasons : I have heard you read them very often.”

David remembered the lines ; they floated mechanically through his brain, as his haggard eyes rested on the graceful hand that touched the book :

“ Your Lord does know my mind ; I cannot love him ! Yet I suppose him virtuous ; know him noble ; Of great estate ; of fresh and stainless youth ; In voices well divulged ; free, learned, and valiant : And in dimensions and the shape of nature, A gracious person—but yet *I* cannot love him— He might have took his answer long ago.”

David sighed heavily.

“ You do not wish to marry this man, Eleanor ?”

“ I cannot love him. I could not love him even if—”

“ If what ?”

“ If I had seen no one that I preferred,” said Eleanor, with desperate courage. Courage that was needed ; for this time her guardian positively started. He struggled, however, for composure.

“ You love some one else ?” said he ; and Eleanor waited, her head feeling dizzy and her hands cold, for the next question—who

she loved. But David did not ask who. He breathed hard and closed his eyes for an instant, struggling with some inward agony. Then he spoke, in much the same voice as before.

“ Is he rich ?”

The question was unexpected, but Eleanor tried to turn it to account in the way of explanation. She answered in a low nervous tone :

“ No ; he has no more than my father bequeathed to you.”

All calmness of manner forsook her guardian.

“ Eleanor,” said he wildly, “ do not speak to me of your father ; speak of what is before us ; this man—this marriage—this letter ; you cannot marry a poor man ; it is my duty—it is your mother’s wish—I sent for you to say—” here he suddenly paused, and flinging his arms forward on the table, he laid his head on them and groaned aloud. Eleanor

rose from her seat and crept to his side, trembling in every limb.

“ I love another,” said she, “ with my whole heart and soul. That being so, you cannot expect me to marry Sir Stephen Penrhyn. I have no desire to be richer than I am ; I am rich enough for both.”

“ Is it Lord Edgar ?”

“ No, oh ! no. How can you think me capable of such a miserable choice ? I that have been your companion so long !”

“ Then name him, Eleanor ; have compassion on me, lest I go mad—lest I go mad before I know what is to become of you, unhappy child ! I only ask you to name him—I can then advise—we shall know what is possible—Eleanor, my little Nell, name him !”

He drew her towards him, with a forced and painful smile, which vainly contrasted with the haggard anxiety of his eyes ; he spoke as he used to speak to her when she

was a little child ; he smoothed her hair as he did in those days, caressingly. There was something strange, something terrible in his manner ; its forced gentleness and patience ; its smothered wildness and pain. Eleanor stared helplessly in his face ; she yielded to the force of his trembling grasp, and bowed forward. Her hand leaned for support on his shoulder ; she bent, till her checked and uneven respiration came warm on his bloodless cheek. She strove to speak, but found no utterance.

“ Whisper it, Eleanor,” said he ; and he turned his head away, as if to make it easier to the embarrassed girl to make her confession, still with the manner he had to her in years gone by. And Eleanor tried to obey, but no sound came ; no sound but the pendulum of the clock, and the loud strong beating of that man’s agitated heart, as he listened and waited for her words. She

heard that: it seemed to strike on her very soul, with a vibrating strength; her own strength failed, and she fainted.

With fierce despair and self-reproach, David Stuart saw the dark lashes sink down over those lovely eyes. He lifted her and laid her on the sofa, and was lingering in momentary doubt whether to wait her recovery or ring for her maid, when the library-door opened, and Lady Raymond entered.

With a start and a shriek she advanced to Eleanor, followed hurriedly by Godfrey.

“Good heavens, what is the matter? What have you done to my child, my Eleanor? Are you fit to be my child’s guardian? What is to become of us? my Eleanor!”

“Miss Raymond fainted during the discussion of that letter,” said David, tossing Sir Stephen’s carefully worded epistle across

the table to Godfrey, who stood sternly lowering at him.

“Whatever ails my sister, it is very obvious she would be better under female care. She did not faint when Lady Margaret discussed this marriage with her.”

The haughty contempt of Godfrey’s manner was lost on David Stuart. He was watching Eleanor, who had re-opened her eyes. She smiled vaguely, and put out her hand to him; he kissed that blanched hand. The whole world might have stood by and cursed him aloud; he heard nothing, saw nothing but that pale girl; his poor Eleanor; (his, more than he knew or could guess, choked as that unuttered confession had been;) lying there in the library, where they had first met; where the fragile child who was now a passionate woman, had crept gently in to ask him of her father’s death. Her father—his friend—his benefactor—who trusted him with his child’s destiny! What

would her destiny be? Who did she love —who did she love?

He was conscious of reproaches addressed to him by Lady Raymond, while he stood lost in thought. Of some gentle pleading from Eleanor to her mother: but what, he knew not. Of Eleanor being led away to her own room, persisting that she felt well again, and of Godfrey's remaining and talking to him fiercely and scornfully of the necessity of his guardianship being put on a more formal footing, and of Eleanor's marriage. But in all this nothing distinct; nothing that he could answer; he was like a man struggling with nightmare.

At length he was conscious that he was left alone. It was a relief; he dropped into a chair, and again buried his face in his hands. When he looked up, the last glimmer of sunset was fading out of the autumnal sky. He rang for lights, and wrote for some time. Then he sent for his own servant:

“Sandy,” said he, “here are some papers Miss Raymond will have to read in the morning; as soon as she is dressed, give them to her. I think I shall be obliged to go to London by the early mail. You need not wait up for me. I will walk across the park.”

Eleanor saw David Stuart that night. She was sitting at the open window, feverish and sleepless. He had come round by the terrace, and was standing with his arms folded, looking up as it seemed, to her room. Some lines recurred to her, which she had heard Lady Margaret sing; the altered version of a most passionate little poem, which could scarcely be sung as it was written, and the original of which is perhaps unknown to half those who sing it:

“I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me--who knows how?
To thy chamber-window, Sweet!”

She murmured the words to herself

restlessly. She longed to go down into the still garden, over the dewy grass ; and there, in the dim moonlight, tell him what she had failed in saying that day.

But he would think it so strange ! She was in her dressing-gown ; it was impossible she could go down so ; and she must pass her mother's room, who slept very lightly, and was very nervous. So she remained ; watching David Stuart, as he stood looking paler than ever, in the light of the cold white moon.

Presently he moved ; he stretched his arms towards her ; and for one startled instant, she thought he perceived her watching him. But that could not be ; for he let his arms fall with a weary desponding gesture, and passed round where the shadow of the corner of the house fell dark across the lawn, and then she saw him no more.

Early, very early in the morning, Eleanor dressed. She had not slept ; she could not sleep ; she waited restlessly for daylight, for

the usual hours, when the loneliness of night would be over, with its troubled watchings, vague resolutions, and weary thoughts ; and she could go to the library and see her guardian. Eleanor thought at last she had hit upon a very easy way of telling him her difficult secret. She could not say “I love *you* ;” she felt more than ever, since yesterday, that that was impossible ; but she would say that she wondered at his supposing she could have formed any attachment out of the home-circle round her—that she never wished to see it changed. Then he must guess, after what she said yesterday, that he himself was the only person she thought of marrying.

After all, it was only one hour of pain and embarrassment, with a life of serene happiness lying beyond. That life was only just beginning, and she laid down its hopes at his feet ; to shape the future as he pleased ; to govern it as he had governed the past ; only not to

leave her; not to give her away to some enamoured stranger, who had made her acquaintance the other day at a ball or party; who was not the friend and companion of years; of whom she knew nothing; with whom she never could be happy; in whose home she must dwell like a caged bird pining to fly back to its nest in the wild wood; pining to return to Aspendale!

She could not live anywhere, but at Aspendale; nor with any one, but David Stuart. So Eleanor passed slowly along the corridor, and down the broad oaken staircase, pausing at every step, on her way to the library to offer up her life and hopes at the shrine of the unconscious idol; only with a feeling of compassion which idols do not inspire; (for she could not but recal the obvious anguish he had suffered the day before,) and which he had taken so much pains to quell. When she made her final

halt at the crimson cloth door, whose opening was to usher her into that loved yet dreaded presence, she smiled to think how often, when a child, she had paused at that very landing, with her slate and copy-book in her hand ; conscious of a half-learnt lesson, or guilty of some monstrous blot on the hastily-written exercise.

The recollection encouraged her ; and with the smile yet lingering on her lips, she pushed open the heavy door, and entered. Her guardian was not in the library ; he must have quitted it lately, for the wax taper on his writing-table was still alight, burned down to the socket ; and his papers scattered about.

Eleanor rang the bell, that she might send him word she was there. That was better than seeking him in the breakfast-room, where perhaps Emma and Godfrey were already established. When she had

rung the bell, she moved towards the writing-table to put out the light. Something strange in the aspect of the room, suddenly struck Eleanor: some inexplicable evidence that it had not been arranged since the preceding day. Her glove was lying on the chair, where she had sate during part of the conversation before she fainted; the chair was exactly in the same position; the volume of Shakspeare had not been moved, which she had drawn towards her in her embarrassed effort at a playful comparison between herself and Olivia. There had been a fire in the grate, even on the warm evening preceding; it had burnt out, and was full of the light floating ashes of consumed paper, which stirred in the draught of the chimney as Eleanor approached.

“Sandy,” said she, as the servant entered, “where is Mr. Stuart? why is the library not ready this morning? what is the

matter?" for Eleanor felt already that something was the matter.

Mr. Stuart was gone to town; he had spoken of it the night before; and the house-keeper thought it a good opportunity to have the library thoroughly swept, and arranged, which the housemaid had not yet begun to do.

Mr. Stuart had left a packet for Miss Raymond to read through, against he came back. Eleanor breathed more freely; it was something connected with her proposed marriage; at least he had written to explain his sudden journey; perhaps Godfrey and he had talked matters over, after she had gone to her own room the previous day. She had not seen any of them after that. Her mother had wished her to keep very quiet, and not even to come down to dinner. She did not know what had passed during the remainder of the day; she was to learn it

now. She sate down, as Sandy closed the library door, and opened the packet: it contained law papers, letters, and a letter from her guardian.

Ah! perhaps — perhaps he had taken courage to own in writing, though not in speaking, how hard his fate would seem if she forsook him; how dearly he loved her; how miserable he had been since Sir Stephen's letter came; how unhappy, struggling against his attachment for months before! Perhaps, on the other hand, Godfrey had spoken harshly, and they had quarrelled, and her guardian would not come back till she had decided as to her marriage; and Eleanor's indignation rose against Godfrey.

She held the unsealed paper in her hand for a minute or two, doubting, and considering thus; as we have all of us done, when the letter we hold would at once resolve all doubts into certainty. Then she glanced

over the hurried agitated scrawl, wondering ; and then she read the first two lines. It was long before Eleanor could read further, so sudden and terrible was the horror which froze her heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRUST BETRAYED.

“ ELEANOR,” the letter began, “ when this reaches you, a censure upon my memory is all that will be possible to human judgment. Begin then by pardoning me. The greatest criminal can only pay for his crime with the forfeit of his life. All may be told in two words: you are a beggar, and I am infamous! Your father left me to guard your fortune; I have risked it, I have lost it; your mother has nothing, you have nothing, all is gone! If bearing a life of

infamy could serve you, or retrieve your injuries, I would live and face the future ; but there is no hope—no hope.

“ I wish to write collectedly ; but I have felt, since this morning, like one who walks in a dream. The post which brought the letter I sent for you to read, brought to me also a letter ; brought the desperate confirmation of impending fears, which, though lifted away by faint hopes at intervals, have embittered the last two years. Life was agony even while hope lasted. Now hope is gone, life would be hell. I go where reproaches cannot reach me. Your mother has reproached me—your brother—without knowing how little or how much I deserved all the bitter words they uttered. They imagine—but why should I cloud your innocent spirit with their imaginings ? It is enough that of that of which they thought me guilty, I am innocent ; but guilty of crime, blacker in dye a thousand times than

any they have fancied. Return to Lady Raymond your father's last letter. Godfrey Marsden brought it to me and desired I would read it over. Tell him it had the effect he intended. Tell him it stabbed me to the heart, though I needed no further wound. I do not know that I could have lived, even if I had not read it. But I know I cannot live with its words glaring before me. Oh, Eleanor ! they are written in words of fire on the surrounding air ! The memory of his love and trust in me, accursed that I am, is my sentence of execution !”

The letter was broken off and resumed in more regular and less hurried writing :

“ I have been very incoherent : it is necessary you should know all, as briefly as I can tell it. When Mr. Christison died, and Dunleath was for sale, you may remember that I went to Scotland. I had a hope then, with the money your father

bequeathed to me, to purchase the house there ; leaving the shooting land for sale. By some strange, some evil chance, at this very time a bank in India connected with one of the great firms in Edinburgh, suspended payment. You would not understand if I were to attempt to explain the business in which I then engaged. It is sufficient to say, that the loan of an enormous sum only for the time necessary to communicate with the Indian firm, would save both banks from breaking ; while the rate of interest for this all important loan would at once put me in possession of a sum more than sufficient to realise the dream of my life, the repurchasing Dunleath. Eleanor, why say to you now, that I had sore struggles with myself? Why plead, that mercantile men of sound and sane views thought it a safe speculation ; that lawyers and men of business combined in

the decision that I risked nothing in lending the money.

“I made the loan, and the two houses in Edinburgh and Calcutta redeemed their credit and stood firm. But there was some uneasiness from the accounts given of the folly, or worse than folly, of one of the partners in the Indian house. I suffered anxiety from day to day, from hour to hour. My first punishment (how heavy it seemed then—how trivial now) arose from the fact of Mrs. Christison changing her mind about the sale of Dunleath. Her daughter resisted the sale, and she yielded. They were obstinate; I found I had put all in jeopardy for no tangible end. The anguish of uncertainty, the terror I endured, who shall comprehend? When I returned from Edinburgh to you, I seemed to bring with me a shadowy fiend who wandered for ever at my side, whispering ‘If all should be lost!’

“ All was lost !

“ When Lady Margaret arrived at Aspendale, a gleam of sunshine crossed my path. She brought with her, documents which had been forwarded to my agent in town, showing that the loan and interest would be remitted in all probability within the next two months. I breathed again. I felt more happy. Dunleath and the past seemed nothing : the future was all : I lived for the hour when I should be able to know all was as before. That hour never came ! Delays, uncertainties, complicated embarrassments, the failure of another house at Calcutta connected with the same firm, the rascality of one of the Indian partners, and the imprudence of others, combined to throw affairs into confusion again.

“ One of the partners arrived at Marseilles. He refused to come to England. I went to meet him. His statements filled me with gloomy fear, though he himself seemed san-

guine ; and earnestly besought me to trust his judgment, and empower him to act for me with the Indian firm. At length the crash came. Both houses stopped simultaneously. One of the partners shot himself ; one went to America ; and out of the wreck of millions nothing is recoverable ! The news reached me yesterday. I received at the same time, Sir Stephen's proposals for your hand.

“ When first that matter was adverted to by Lady Margaret, while affairs were yet in a condition which it was possible to retrieve, I confess I hoped that you would refuse this man ; that you did not love him ; that time might yet be granted me, before the inevitable exposure of the steps I had taken with respect to your fortune. I thought, if I could delay this or any other marriage, it would be well ; but in the horror of yesterday's news, the one gleam of light, the straw at which my drowning soul caught, was that you might love him ; and that your mar-

riage with one so wealthy might spare you the change I had brought upon you, and my disgrace be all your pain. You did not love him—you loved another ; all was lost !

“ Oh ! Eleanor, when they speak of me, as they will, as they must speak of me ; when all curse me with just contempt, set against my crime years of remembrance. They will tell you I lied, when I said that I loved you tenderly from your childhood ; that I prayed to God to do my duty by you ; but it was true, Eleanor—it was true !”

* * * *

The letter was again broken off, and the remainder was so blotted as to be scarcely legible.

“ I have been out to look my farewell at your window. Oh ! how still and calm is this sultry night. You are wrapt in a holy and quiet sleep, in the keeping of God’s good angels. You have prayed ; prayed it

may be, for me. I can neither sleep nor pray."

* * * * *

"Who do you love, my Eleanor? I shall never know; but if he is poor, I have cursed his happiness and yours. Oh, think well, if this is but some girlish fancy! The interval was so brief for you to fix your whole affections! If this is only a wandering dream, try to receive Sir Stephen's proposals with welcome. Love, at your age, is an illusion oftener than a reality. You may live to smile at the notion of the love you now entertain."

* * * * *

"But what am I, that I should advise you? It is I who have chained and crippled your life: it is I who make choice difficult; happiness perhaps impossible! Where are the days when I thought to serve and aid you? I have destroyed you—I have

destroyed myself—I have defrauded the widow and the orphan” !

* * * * *

“ Wandering like a demon spirit, seeking rest and finding none ! If the night air was natural, it would have cooled my brain ; but Heaven is against me. I cannot breathe ; the sultriness is dreadful ; your window is still open. Oh, lovely gentle child, let my miserable farewell reach you in your placid slumbers only as the air of heaven. Try to believe me ! by the happiness of the past,—by the anguish of the present,—by my sin and my despair,—I took up the charge your father left me, as a sacred task. My life was dedicated to it. If I had thought of myself, I should have left you for India or Scotland. I thought of *you* ! Who will believe me ? One hour’s temptation blotted out years of endeavour, and vows for a lifetime ! Their reproaches ring in my ears : their reproaches, untrue and yet just.

The voice of the dead joins with them in bitter upbraiding. Even you, it may be—even you—on whose mercy I count, (what right have I to count upon it?) even you, if you love, may upbraid me. You cannot wed him you love, because he is poor, and I have beggared you!"

* * * * *

"It seems as if I could have died with less pain, feeling certain of your pardon. But that may not be. Oh! if I could tear my heart out, and die so—I would do it. I leave your home—I leave the pistols I had loaded—I will not pollute the house with my blood. Silent as my shame, death shall close over me. There, where we have often sate together—there, where you promised to bear with me—I will die. Let the grey moss-covered stones by the Linn, seem to you as the tomb of a miserable friend. If you can curb your

heart to accept this wealthy man who loves you so entirely, do. Marry, and leave Aspendale; and if by God's mercy you are happy, come some day to the Linn—some day of peace and sunshine, like those we have known there—and breathe a forgiveness for me!"

* * * * *

"It is darker; it is the hour before dawn; the dawn I shall never see. Oh, Eleanor, have mercy on my memory! Do not let them curse it before you—for the sake of the days when you were a child—and I was your true guardian.

"DAVID STUART."

What followed the reading of that letter, Eleanor herself in the after years, could never clearly or entirely recollect. There was a search; wild confusion; exclamations of horror and blame; sounds of weeping; doors opening and shutting, or left standing

open, while many persons hurried to and fro ; messengers riding past the windows, the hoofs of their horses seeming to tread on Eleanor's brain ; the sound of the clock, striking first one hour and then another, as it struck on usual days, when time was measured for life and not for eternity ; and then—how or from whom she could never precisely recal—the confusion of horror was disentangled, and made definite and clear. Some one had ascertained the precise spot at the Linn, where the suicide must have destroyed himself. The earth was scraped, as by some one slipping or letting himself drop from the roots of a scathed tree, that projected over the black shining pool beneath the waterfall. A torn handkerchief still hung on one of the leafless branches. Its bright colour, fluttering in the morning breeze on that ghastly sapless tree, told those who searched where to pause. They did not find the body ; the pool went too far underground,

there were those who were brave enough to dare the eddies in light, and the darkness beyond, for a little way, to try and drag the wretched man out of the death pool, and give him burial; but to no purpose. They all returned—and Eleanor knew that David Stuart was dead; drowned in the roaring Linn!

There were other thoughts, she knew, connected with this event. How she had now no fortune; the money her father left her being gone. How her guardian had never loved her; all his agitation and strange abstraction being the terror of an unconvicted criminal, which she had mistaken for love. How her mother and Godfrey would now, with justice, wring her heart by sitting in judgment on him who was gone. But these considerations troubled Eleanor but little as yet. She rather knew they were there, to be hereafter dwelt upon, than was conscious of a present meaning to them. The plunging

horror was too recent, to admit of the outer eddies and circles of thought widening themselves on the surface of memory. One only thought beat backwards and forwards in her brain, like the surging billows in a sea-cave. He was dead! drowned in the roaring Linn. He was DEAD. From under the oppression of that sentence, Eleanor could not move. It lay across her heart like a bar of iron: if she struggled for some other idea, it crushed her back again with its heavy monotony of anguish.

David Stuart was dead—drowned in the roaring Linn !

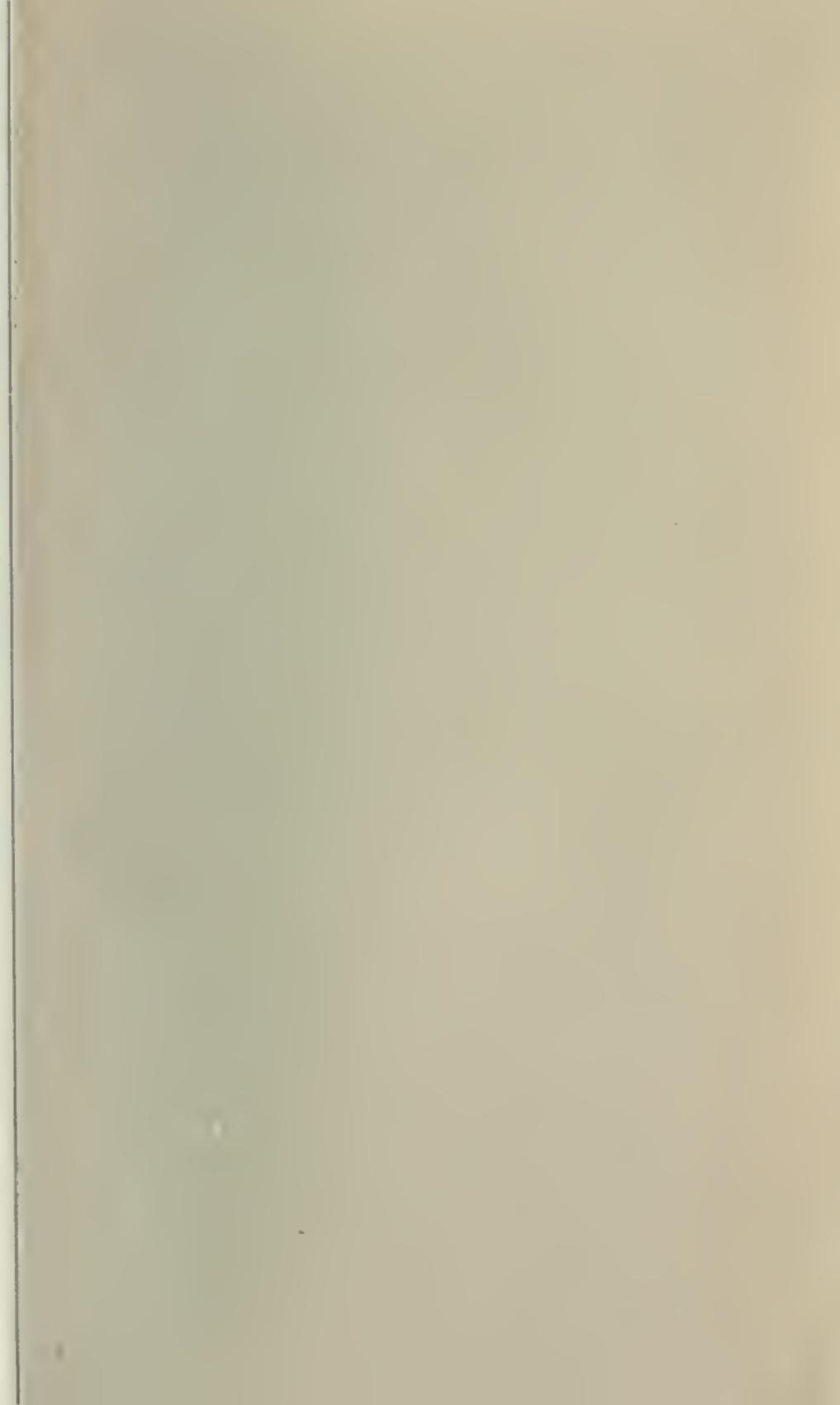
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